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C. M. Esselen

3

NAME CAST INTO THE TREE-ALPHABET
FOR MATTHEW CRAIG ESHLEMAN
born at Lima, Peru, FEBRUARY 22 (?), 1966.

/ . .

BETH LUIS NION (ogham), the

nion
ash/ The month extends from feb 18
to march 17 . tuesday

is the day of trees and pasture .
I am a wind on the deep waters .
the wind that dries the floods .
Beryl sea-green is the stone .
Dwelling secure in the hollow
ship until
wind wafts him home
Clear is the color of the wind in the aspen (white
poplar)

M O I R I A C A O I E S U

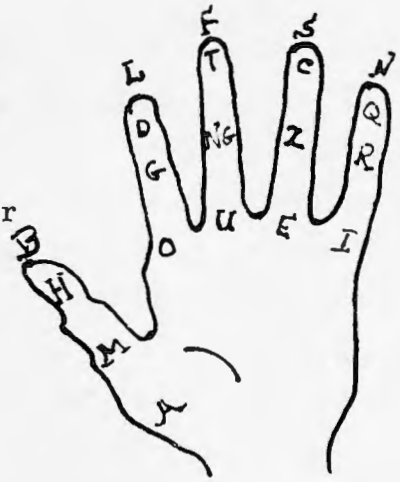
The piece of brass has been given new strength
The birch peg offered the suitor says
'you may proceed' it can have a
permanent-type effect . we know
M U I N, the vine, the 10th tree, is the phallus,
Venus the thumb
in below the first joint, M U R I A T H, I
distribute the seed on Moriah,
Jehovah's holy mountain, the vine
full of joy and exhilaration
& wrath. The Danaans
carried with them, North, more than the emblem, the plant
could fruit of a few protected and Southern slopes,
but not turn wild :
hence the bramble
became by extension, in celtic lands, sacred to Osiris
and the Thracian Dionysus . the amethyst .
dwelling secure in the hollow ship until

The last day of September,
(sept
ember)
when the devil enters the black berries . the black
berries .

M U I N COLL EADHA

vine, hazel, & aspen

coll and eadha are the same finger



the 4th finger

the 4th of the vowels

the 9th tree (hazel)

counting from the other direction .

the leech or physic finger, ring finger for ESU at the

base of the digit, says

repose, the god is shown

plucking festal branches with a left hand

where his right should be .

but as wisdom, (coll)

I am consumed by fire, the

hazel fruits after 9 years, says the arbiter

Mac Cool, son of Hazel, which can dowse for hidden water,

buried treasure, and in cases of theft or murder,

guilty persons . Wisdom is sweet, com-

pact and sustaining in a small, hard shell . Nut
and apple harvests coincide, thus Q (written CC) and
king Arthur traveled to Avalon, apple island, to be
healed of his grievous wounds . And the goddess
summoned Bran into the land of youth with an apple branch,
where the blossom and the branch
were one .
With the tip of the 4th finger, physicians
used to stir their potions
and medicaments .
The theory was
no poison could adhere to it and not
communicate directly with the heart, a small
vein which can be seen at its base was reputed
to run directly to the pump .
I have been the blue salmon,
the pool overhung with hazel trees . 9 sacred to the muses
as the vine proclaims / also the hill of poetry .
The titmouse,' most unabashed of birds, like poets
band together in fall to seek a liberal hand .

Wine as we know, is poet's proper drink, and so
Ben Jonson, as laureate, demanded his fee
be paid in sack.
Venus the thumb is also Isis' palmtree

() 'You may proceed'))

A star used to be tattooed
in the hollow between the
thumb and forefinger,
and in some ports this is still honored, begging Venus
(of the sea) and Zeus (of the air) to bring
the sailor safe ashore . We are back to
tuesday/

nion \ I am a wind on the keep waters / 3rd tree
coll \ I am a salmon swift in the pool / 9th tree
muin \ I am the hill of poetry / and the / 10th tree
eadha \ shield for every head . / the 4th tree [of the vowels]

Passion, wisdom, and strength under the tree of
Autumn and old age, white
poplar, aspen is the shield maker's tree, golden
head dresses of aspen leaves are found in
Mesopotamian burials of 3000 B.C., and
the measuring rod of Irish coffin-makers was of aspen to keep
in mind that death
is not the end tin . ESU . repose /
The birch peg is offered
The piece of brass has been given new strength
The runes speak well .

PAUL BLACKBURN

RITES OF PARTICIPATION

The drama of our time is the coming of all men into one fate, "the dream of everyone, everywhere." The fate or dream is the fate of more than mankind. Our secret Adam is written now in the script of the primal cell. We have gone beyond the reality of the incomparable nation or race, the incomparable Jehovah in the shape of a man, the incomparable Book or Vision, the incomparable species, in which identity might hold & defend its boundaries against an alien territory. All things have come now into their comparisons. But these comparisons are the correspondences that haunted Paracelsus, who saw also that the key to man's nature was hidden in the larger nature.

In space this has meant the extension of our "where" into a world ecology. The O.E.D. gives 1873 as the earliest English use of the word in the translation of Haeckel's History of Creation -- "the great series of phenomena of comparative anatomy and ontogeny . . . oecology." The very form of man has no longer the isolation of a superior paradigm but is involved in its morphology in the cooperative design of all living things, in the life of everything, everywhere. We go now to the once-called primitive -- to the bush man, the child, or the ape -- not to read what we were but what we are. In the psychoanalysis of the outcast and vagabond, the neurotic and psychotic, we slowly discover the hidden features of our own emotional and mental processes. We hunt for the key to language itself in the dance of the bees or in the chemical code of the chromosomes.

The inspiration of Marx bringing economies into comparison and imagining a world commune, of Darwin bringing species into comparison and imagining a world family of the living in evolution, of Frazer bringing magic, rituals and gods into comparison and imagining a world cult -- the inspiration growing in the nineteenth century of imperialist expansions was towards a larger community of man. In time, this has meant our "when" involves and is involved in an empire that extends into the past and future beyond times and eras, beyond the demarcations of history. Not only the boundaries of states or

civilizations but also the boundaries of historical periods are inadequate to define the vital figure in which we are involved. "For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other," Diotima tells Socrates in Plato's Symposium, "does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment."

The Symposium of Plato was restricted to a community of Athenians, gathered in the common creation of an arete, an aristocracy of spirit, inspired by the homoEros, taking its stand against lower or foreign orders, not only of men but of nature itself. The intense yearning, the desire for something else, of which we too have only a dark and doubtful presentiment, remains, but our areté, our ideal of vital being, rises not in our identification in a hierarchy of higher forms but in our identification with the universe. To compose such a symposium of the whole, such a totality, all the old excluded orders must be included. The female, the proletariat, the foreign; the animal and vegetative; the unconscious and the unknown; the criminal and failure --all that has been outcast and vagabond must return to be admitted in the creation of what we consider we are.

The dissolving of boundaries of time, as in H. D.'s Palimpsest, so that Egyptian or Hellenistic ways invade the contemporary scene--The reorganization of identity to extend the burden of consciousness--this change of mind has been at work in many fields. The thought of primitives, dreamers, children, or the mad --once excluded by the provincial claims of common sense from the domain of the meaningful or significant--has been reclaimed by the comparative psychologies of William James, Freud, Levy-Bruhl, Paiget, by the comparative linguistics of Sapir or Whorf, brought into the community of a new epistemology.

"Past the danger point, past the point of any logic and of any meaning, and everything has meaning," H.D. writes in Bid Me To Live: "Start superimposing, you get odd composites, nation on nation." So, Malraux in his Psychology of Art hears "a furtive colloquy in progress between the statuary of the Royal Portals of Chartres and the great fetishes" beginning in museums of the mind where all the arts of man

have been brought into the complex of a new idea of Art and Man in their being superimposed. "Our art world is one," he writes in The Metamorphosis of the Gods, "in which a Romanesque crucifix and an Egyptian statue of a dead man can both be living presences." "In our imaginary museum the great art of Europe is but one great art among others, just as the history of Europe has come to mean one history among others." "Each civilization had its 'high places'," he concludes in the Introduction: "All mankind is now discovering its own. And these are not (as the nineteenth century took for granted) regarded as successive landmarks of art's long pilgrimage through time. Just as Cezanne did not see Poussin as Tintoretto's successor, Chartres does not mark an 'advance' on Angkor, or Borobudur, or the Aztec temples, any more than its Kings are an 'advance' on the Kwannon at Nara, on the Plumed Serpents, or on Pheidias' Horsemen."

If, as Pound began to see in The Spirit of Romance, "All ages are contemporaneous", our time has always been, and the statement that the great drama of our time is the coming of all men into one fate is the statement of a crisis we may see as ever-present in Man wherever and whenever a man has awakened to the desire for wholeness in being. "The continuous present," Gertrude Stein called this sense of time and history, and she saw the great drama as man's engagement in a composition of the contemporary. Man is always in the process of this composition. "The composition is the thing seen by every one living in the living they are doing," she writes in Composition As Explanation: "they are the composing of the composition that at the time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living. It is that that makes living a thing they are doing."

"Nothing changes from generation to generation," she writes later in her lecture Portraits and Repetition, "except the composition in which we live and the composition in which we live makes the art which we see and hear." "Once started expressing this thing, expressing any thing there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence." "Each civilization insisted in its own way before it went away." To enter into "our time", she saw as "a thing that is very troublesome", for life itself was a disturbance of all composition--"a fear a doubt and a judgement and a conviction",

troubling the waters toward some needed "quality of distribution and equilibration."

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The first person plural--the "we", "our", "us" -- is a communal consciousness in which the "I" has entered into the company of imagined like minds, a dramatic voice in which the readers and the man writing are gathered into one composition, in which we may find kindred thought and feeling, an insistence, in Plutarch or Dante, Plato or D.H. Lawrence, closer to our inner insistence than the thought and feeling of parents or neighbors. The discovery of self, time and world, is an entering into or tuning to possibilities of self, time and world, that are given.

"The single experience lodges in an individual consciousness and is, strictly speaking, incommunicable," Sapir writes in Language: "To be communicated it needs to be referred to a class which is tacitly accepted by the community as an identity. Thus, the single impression which I have of a particular house must be identified with all my other impressions of it. Further, my generalized memory or my 'notion' of this house must be merged with the notions that all other individuals who have seen the house have formed of it. The particular experience that we started with has now been widened so as to embrace all possible impressions or images that sentient beings have formed or may form of the house in question. In other words, the speech element 'house' is the symbol, first and foremost, not of a single perception, nor even of the notion of a particular object but of a 'concept', in other words, of a convenient capsule of thought that embraces thousands of distant experiences and that is ready to take in thousands more. If the single significant elements of speech are the symbols of concepts, the actual flow of speech may be interpreted as a record of the setting of these concepts into mutual relations."

There is no isolate experience of anything then, for to come into "house" or "dog", "bread" or "wine", is to come into a company. Eros and Logos are inextricably mixed, daemons of an initiation in each of our lives into a new being. Every baby is surrounded by elders of a mystery. The first words, the "da-da" and "ma-ma", are keys given in a repeated ritual by parental priest and priestess to a locus

for the child in his chaotic babbling, whereby from the oceanic and elemental psychic medium--warmth and cold, calm and storm, the moodiness previous to being--persons, Daddy and Mama, appear. But these very persons are not individual personalities but communal fictions of the family cultus, vicars of Father and Mother, as the Pope is a Vicar of Christ. The Child, the word "child", is himself such a persona, inaccessible to the personality of the individual, as the language of adult personal affairs is inaccessible to the child. To have a child is always a threat to the would-be autonomous personality, for the parent must take leave of himself in order to enter an other impersonatiom, evoking the powers of Fatherhood or Motherhood, so that the infant may be brought up from the dark of his individuality into a new light, into his Childhood. For the transition to be made at all, to come into the life of the spirit, in which this Kindergarten is a re-created stage set of the mythic Garden, means a poetry then, the making up of an imaginary realm in which the individual parents and infant participate in a community that exists in a time larger than any individual life-time, in a language. For "Father", "Mother", "Child", are living words, deriving their meaning from thousands of distinct experiences, and the actual flow of family life, like the actual flow of speech, "may be interpreted as the setting of these concepts into mutual relations." The toys of the nursery are not trivia but first given instruments of an extension in consciousness, our creative life. There is a travesty made of sacred objects when the building blocks that are also alphabet blocks, the animal and human dolls, the picture books, are rendered cute or babyish.

"The maturity of man--" Nietzsche writes in Beyond Good and Evil: "that means, to have reacquired the seriousness that one had as a child at play." In The Zohar of Moses of Leon, God Himself appears as Child-Creator-of-the-World: "When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to make the world, all the letters of the Alphabet were still embryonic, and for two thousand years the Holy One, blessed be He, had contemplated them and toyed with them. When He came to create the world, all the letters presented themselves before Him in reversed order. The letter Tau advanced in front and pleaded: May it please Thee, O Lord of the world, to place me first

in the creation of the world, seeing that I am the concluding letter of EMeTh (Truth) which is engraved upon Thy seal." One by one the letters present themselves. At the last, "the Beth then entered and said: O Lord of the world, may it please Thee to put me first in the creation of the world, since I represent the benedictions (Berakhoth) offered to Thee on high and below. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: Assuredly, with thee I will create the world, and thou shalt form the beginning in the creation of the world. The letter Aleph remained in her place without presenting herself. Said the Holy one, blessed be His name: Aleph, Aleph, wherefore comest thou not before Me like the rest of the letters? She answered: Because I saw all the other letters leaving Thy presence without any success. What, then, could I achieve there? And further, since Thou hast already bestowed on the letter Beth this great gift, it is not meet for the Supreme King to take away the gift which He has made to His servant and give it to another. The Lord said to her: Aleph, Aleph, although I will begin the creation of the world with the beth, thou wilt remain the first of letters. My unity shall not be expressed except through thee, on thee shall be based all calculations and operations of the world, and unity shall not be expressed save by the letter Aleph. Then the Holy One, blessed be His name, made higher-world letters of a large pattern and lower-world letters of a small pattern. It is therefore that we have here two words beginning with beth (Bereshith bara) "in-the-beginning He-created" and then two words beginning with aleph (Elohim eth) "God the" ."

In this primal scene, before the beginning of the world that is also here before the beginning of a writing, the Self contemplates and toys in a rite of play until the letters present themselves and speak; as in another primal scene, in a drama or play of the family, the child contemplates and plays with the sounds of a language in order to enter a world in which Father and Mother present themselves and speak. So too in the fullness of the imagination, blocks and even made-up playmates present themselves. The teddy bear was once in the shaman world of the great northern forests Grandfather or Folk-Father. The figures we play with, the members of our play world, given as they are, like the Katchina dolls of the Zuni child, are

spirit figures. "My unity shall not be expressed except through thee," the Child-Creator promises. It is the first promise of love. "on thee shall be based all calculations and operations of the world."

These powers, the ambience in which all things of our world speak to us and in which we in turn answer, the secret allegiances of the world of play, the psychic depth of time transformed into eternity in which the conceptual persons of Father and Mother, Child and Play-Thing, exist — these are pre-rational. Brother and Sister have such an existence in the unreal that, where actual brother and sister do not exist or are unwilling to play the part, imaginary brother and sister may appear.

For men who declare themselves partisans of the rational mind at war with all other possibilities of being, the pre-rational or the irrational appears as an enemy within. It was not only the Poet, but Mother and Father also, that Plato would exclude from his Republic. In the extreme of the rationalist presumption, the nursery is not the nursery of an eternal child but of a grown-up, a rational man. Common sense and good sense exist in an armed citadel surrounded by the threatening countryside of phantasy, childishness, madness, irrationality, irresponsibility — an exile and despised humanity. In that city where Reason has preserved itself by retreating from the totality of the self, infants must play not with the things of the imagination nor entertain the lies of the poets but play house, government, business, philosophy or war. Before the guardians of this state the voices and persons of the Child-Creator stand condemned as auditory and visual hallucinations, a dangerous non-sense.

In the world of the Zohar, dolls were not permitted. The Child plays with the letters of an alphabet and Logos is the creator of the world. Man is to take his reality from, to express his unity in, the letter. But this letter is, like the doll, alive to the mind. Tau presents herself and speaks, just as the bear in our nursery does. To the extent that once for us too alphabet blocks were animate, all future architectures and worlds are populated, and we are prepared to understand the world-experience of the Kabbalist.

In this world-experience rationality does not exist apart from the whole, but the understanding searches ever to picture the self in the

ununderstandable. The human spirit draws its life from a tree larger and more various than knowing, and reason stands in need of a gift, "the gift of the queen to them that wander with her in exile."

There is a return in the imagination to the real, an ascent of the soul to its "root", that Hayyim Vital describes in his life work, The Tree of Life: "The imaginative faculty will turn a man's thoughts to imagine and picture as if it ascended in the higher worlds up to the roots of his soul . . . until the imagined image reaches its highest source and there the images of the supernal lights are imprinted on his mind as if he imagined and saw them in the same way in which his imaginative faculty normally pictures in his mind mental contents deriving from the world." We seem to be in the description of the process of a poem, for here too the mind imagines, but then enters a real it had not imagined, where the image becomes informed, from above or below, and takes over as an entity in itself, a messenger from a higher real. In his ascent the mystic is irradiated by the light of the tree and in his descent the light finds a medium through which to flow back into the daily world: "The thought of the prophet expands and rises from one level to another . . . until he arrives at the point where the root of his soul is. Next he concentrates on raising the light of the sefirah to En Sof and from there he draws the light down, from on high down to his rational soul and from there, by means of the imaginative faculty, down to his animal soul, and there all things are pictured either by the inner senses of the imaginative faculty or by the outer senses."

Returning from En Sof, the unknowable, unimaginable God, from beyond sense, the imaginer, no longer imagining but realizing, carries a light from station to station, sefiroth to sefiroth, irradiating the imagined with reality, transforming the sense of the divine — the articulated Tree of Life — the cosmos, the rational soul and the animal sould, in light of a source that is a numinous non-sense or beyond sense.

This Tree, too, we saw each year, for at the birthday of the Child-Christos, we were as children presented with a tree from which or under which gifts appeared — wishes made real. This Christmas tree came, we know, from the tree-cults of the German tribes,

ancestral spirits — a burning tree. But it is also a tree of lights, and where, in the time of Jacob Boehme, in the early seventeenth century, the Jewish and the Germanic mystery ways are wedded in one, the Christmas tree may have also been the Divine Tree of the Zohar, lit with the lights of the sefirah.

In this ritual of the imagination of Hayyim Vital, there is not only the ascent by pretending, the "as if" of his text, the pretension then, but the mystic is pretender to a throne, a "source" or "root" in the Divine. In the descent a magic is worked and all the pretended way of the ascent is rendered "greater than Reality". Not only the deep dream but the day dream enlightens or enlivens. "Occasionally," Werblowsky relates from Vital, "the imaginative faculty may even externalize or project the effects of this 'light' so that the experience becomes one of external sense impressions such as of the apparition of angelic messengers, the hearing of voices."

This Tree of Life is also the tree of generations, for its branches that are also roots are male and female, and the light or life is a mystery of the Shekinah, the ultimate Spirit-Mother of Israel as well as God's Glory. The root or seed is a quickening source in the immortal or eternal womb, wherein each man is immortal.

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In his study of Australian tribal rites, the psychoanalyst Geza Roheim draws another configuration of source, dream, and transformation of reality, that may cast further light on our way towards a picture of what is involved in poetry when the images and personae of a dream greater than reality appear as active forces in the poet's world:

> "Strehlow, who as a missionary living for decades among the Aranda was certainly an authority on their language, tells us that he cannot explain the meaning of the word altjira, but it seems that the natives connect to it the concept of something that has no beginning — erina itja arbmanakala, him none made. Spencer and Gillen, however, have given another interpretation of the word. In their glossary we find 'altjeringa: name applied by the Arunta, Kaitish, and Unmatjera tribes to the far past or

dream times in which their mythical ancestors lived. The word altjeri means dream.' Strehlow denies this; he says the word for dream is altjirerama, and gives the following etymology: altjira (god) rama (to see).

For one thing, it is clear that altjira means dream and not god or ancestor (as Strehlow indicates) for I found that a folk-tale, a narrative with a happy end, is also called altjira.

It is evident that Strehlow, from his preoccupation with Altjira (God) of the Aranda Bible, managed to miss the real meaning of the word. Altjira = dream, altjireramaa = to dream; altjirerinja = dreaming. This is as near as I could get to Spencer and Gillen's altjeringa. Moses thought it must be a mistake for either altirerindja or altjiranga. There was no name for any mythical period. The time when the ancestors wandered on earth was called altjiranga nakala, i.e. 'ancestor was', like ljata nama, i.e. 'now is'. Other expressions were noted as equivalents of altjiranga nakala; these were imanka nakala, 'long time ago was', or kutata nakala, 'eternally was'. This led us to the explanation and etymology of the word altjiranga mitjina. Mitjina is equivalent to kutata, 'eternal'; nga is the ablative suffix from; therefore altjiranga mitjina = 'the eternal ones from the dream' or 'the eternal people who come in dreams'. This is not my explanation, but that of the old men, Moses, Renana, and Jirramba. Another Aranda word for dream, ancestor, and story, is tnankara. It is not often used, and as far as I could see it means exactly the same as altjira."

In story and tribal rite, the Australian native seeks to convert time and space into an expression of his unity, to create a language of acts and things, of devouring and being devoured, of giving birth and being born, in which man and the world about him come into one body. "In an emu myth of the Aranda, Marakuja (Hands Bad), the old man emu, takes his bones out and transforms them into a cave . . . The kangaroo men take the mucus from their noses; it becomes a stone, still visible now. The rocks become black where they urinate." Here the altjiranga mitjina, the ones living in a dream of time more

real than the mortality of the time past, invade the immediate scene. For the Australian as for Heraclitus, "Immortal mortals, mortal immortals, their being dead is the other's life." The things lost in time return and are kept in the features of the place. "Environment is regarded as if it were derived from human beings," Roheim observes.

In repeated acts — bleeding, pissing, casting mucus, spitting into the ground, or in turn, eating the totemic food and drinking the blood of the fathers — the boy is initiated into the real life of the tribe. "An old man sits beside him and whispers into his ear the totemic name. The boy then calls out the esoteric name as he swallows the food. The emphasis on the place name in myth and ritual can only mean one thing, that both myth and ritual are an attempt to cathect environment with libido . . . The knowledge of the esoteric name 'aggregates' unites the boy to the place or to the animal species or to anything that was strange before."

The "beast, anus, semen, urine, leg, foot" in the Australian song, chant or enchantment, that is also hill, hole, see, stream, tree or rock, where "in the Toara ceremony the men dance around the ring shouting the names of male and female genital organs, shady trees, hills, and some of the totems of their tribe," are most familiar to the Freudian convert Roheim. He sees with a sympathy that rises from the analytic cult in which Freud has revived in our time a psychic universe in which dream has given a language where, by a "sexual obsession" (as Jung calls it), the body of man and the body of creation are united.

The "blood" of the Aranda, the "libido" of the Freudian, may also be the "light" of our Kabbalist text. "En Sof", Gershom Scholem tells us in Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: "is not only the hidden Root of all Roots

> it is also the sap of the tree; every branch representing an attribute, exists not by itself but by virtue of En Sof, the hidden God. And this tree of God is also, as it were, the skeleton of the universe; it grows throughout the whole of creation and spreads branches through all its ramifications. All mundane and created

things exist only because something of the power of the Sefiroth lives and acts in them.

The simile of man is as often used as that of the Tree. The Biblical word that man was created in the image of God means two things to the Kabbalist: first, that the power of the Sefiroth, the paradigm of divine life, exists and is active also in man. Secondly, that the world of the Sefiroth, that is to say the world of God the Creator, is capable of being visualized under the image of man the created. From this it follows that the limbs of the human body are nothing but images of a certain spiritual node of existence which manifests itself in the symbolic figure of Adam Kadmon, the primordial man. The Divine Being Himself cannot be expressed. All that can be expressed are His symbols. The relation between En Sof and its mystical qualities, the Sefiroth, is comparable to that between the soul and the body, but with the difference that the human body and soul differ in nature, one being material and the other spiritual, while in the organic whole of God all spheres are substantially the same."

"The world of the Sefiroth is the hidden world of language," Scholem continues, "the world of divine names." "Totemic names," Roheim calls the whispered pass-words of the Australian rite. "The creative names which God called into the world," Scholem calls the Sefiroth, "the names which He gave to Himself." It is the alphabet of letters revealed to the initiate as at once the alphabet of what he is and what the universe is and the alphabet of eternal persons.

As Scholem hints, "the conception of the Sefiroth as parts or limbs of the mystical anthropos leads to an anatomical symbolism which does not shrink from the most extravagant conclusions." Man's "secret parts" are secret names or hidden keys to the whole figure of man, charged with magic in their being reserved. In the communal image, the human figure is male and female.. Ass-hole, penis, cunt, navel, were not only taboo but sacred, words to be revealed in initiations of the soul to the divine body, as at Eleusis the cunt of a woman in the throws of birth was shown. In what we call

carnal knowledge, in the sexual union of male and female nakedness, God and His creation, the visible and invisible, the above and the below are also united.

Ham, who sees the nakedness of his father, is the prototype of the Egyptian who in an alien or heretic religion knows the secrets of God. To steal a look, like the theft of fire, is a sin, for the individual seeks to know without entering the common language in which things must be seen and not seen.

"At the initiation ceremony the point is to displace libido from the mother to the group of fathers," Roheim writes. In the contemporaneity of our human experience with all it imagines, there may be not a displacement but an extension of libido: the revelation of the mother remains, the revelation of the male body is added. "Some old men stand in the ring and catching hold of their genitals tell the boys to raise their eyes and take particular notice of those parts. The old men next elevate their arms above their heads and the boys are directed to look at their armpits. Their navels are exhibited in the same way. The men then put their fingers on each side of their mouths and draw their lips outward as wide as possible, lolling out their tongues and inviting the special attention of the novices. They next turn their backs and, stooping down, ask the novices to take particular notice of their posterior parts."

For Roheim, the images and magic of Australian story and rite are one with the images and magic of all dreams:

> After having withdrawn cathexis from environment, we fall asleep. But when the cathexis is concentrated in our own bodies we send it out again and form a new world, in our dreams. If we compare dream mechanisms with the narratives of dream-times we find an essential similarity between the two. The endless repetitions of rituals and wanderings and hunting are indeed very different from a dream; but when we probe deeper we find that they are overlaid by ceremony and perhaps also by history. The essential point in the narratives as in the ritual is that man makes the world — as he does in sleep.

> These natives do not wander because they like to . . . Man is naturally attached to the country where he was born because it, more than anything else, is a symbol of his mother. All natives will refer to their 'place' as a 'great place'; as they say 'I was incarnated there' or 'born there'. Economic necessity, however, compels him time and again to leave his familiar haunts and go in search of food elsewhere. Against this compulsion to repeat separation, we have the fantasy embodied in myth and ritual in which he himself creates the world.

Where the nursing woman and the countryside itself are both "Mother", and where in turn the men of the tribe may initiate and reveal maleness as an other Mother, "Mother" means unity, what Gertrude Stein called the Composition. What we experience in dreaming is not a content of ourselves but the track of an inner composition of ourselves. We are in-formed by dreams, as in daily life we experience that which we are able to grasp as information. We see, hear, taste, smell, feel, what can be drawn into a formal relation; to sense at all involves attention and composition. "It is very interesting that nothing inside in them, that is when you consider the very long history of how every one ever acted or has felt, it is very interesting that nothing inside in them in all of them makes it connectedly different," Stein writes in Composition As Explanation: "The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen." The endless repetitions of rituals and wanderings and hunting as the pattern of life for the Australian is a living inside the Composition; and in their exhibiting the secrets of the male body to the boy, the men of the tribe are making a composition where what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. In the ritual, song, parts of the body, parts of the landscape, man and nature, male and female, are united in a secret composite of magic names.

"One of the main sources of male creative power," Roheim tells us, "is the incantation itself."

> When I asked old Wapiti and the other chiefs what makes the animals grow? the spirits? the ancestors? O, no, they said: jelindja wara, the words only. The form of the incantation is an endless, monotonous flow of words, and actually the men urinate very frequently while performing the ceremonies. This parallelism between the words and the fluid is brought out in a description by Lloyd Warner: 'The blood runs slowly and the rhythm of the song is conducted with equal slowness. In a second or two the blood spurts and runs in a rapid stream. The beat of the song sung by the old men increases to follow the rhythm of the blood.'

We may begin to see, given Stein's concept of insistence that informs composition, and then thinking of the pulse of the living egg-cell itself, that beat, rhythm, underlies every figure of our experience. Life itself is an endless, monotonous flow, wherever the individual cannot enter into it as revealed in dance and melody to give rhythmic pattern; the world about goes inert and dead. The power of the painter in landscape is his revelation of such movement and rhythm in seeing, information, in what otherwise would have been taken for granted.

Gertrude Stein, reflecting upon permanence and change in the artist's vision, sees that "the only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything." Close to the Cubist Movement in Paris, she had experienced how painting or writing in a new way had revealed coordinations of what was seen and heard towards an otherwise hidden unborn experience of the world, so that one saw and heard with a profound difference. "A new cadence means a new idea," H.D. and Richard Aldington, writing in the Preface to the Imagist Anthology of 1916, declared. Here too, cadence is how it is done; to make clear the meaning of cadence they referred to the choral line of Greek poetry that was also the movement of the choral

dance, strophe and antistrophe. So too, Roheim, initiate of Freudianism, as Stein was initiate of Cubism, or H.D. of Imagism, sees in the narratives of his Australian informants how "in all of them environment is made out of man's activity," for he had himself experienced a conversion in which a new environment for man had been made out of analytic activity. The "manmade world" in which "environment is regarded as if it were derived from human beings" is the narrative itself; the unity of things in how the story is told.

Parts and operations of the human body, but also parts and operations of the cosmos, are related in a new ground, a story or picture or play, in which feeling and idea of a larger whole may emerge. The flow of sound from the throat and the flow of urine from the bladder, the flow of energy from the dancing feet, the flow of forms in the landscape, the flow of water and of air felt, translated in a rhythmic identity disclose to the would-be initiate what man is but also what the world is — both other and more than he is himself, than the world itself is.

Cézanne working at his vision of Mont Sainte-Victoire or Dali at his paranoic vision of the Catalonian landscape not only draw but are drawn by what they draw. From body and from world towards an other body and other world, man derives meaning in a third element, the created — the rite, the dance, the narrative; the painting, the poem, the book. And in this new medium, in a new light, "man" and "environment" both are made up.

The power of the poet is to translate experience from daily time where the world and ourselves pass away as we go on into the future, from the journalistic record, into a melodic coherence in which words — sounds, meanings, images, voices — do not pass away or exist by themselves but are kept by rime to exist everywhere in the consciousness of the poem. The art of the poem, like the mechanism of the dream or the intent of the trival myth and dromena, is a cathexis: to keep present and immediate a variety of times and places, persons and events. In the melody we make, the possibility of eternal life is hidden, and experience we thought lost returns to us.

*

"The eternal ones of the dream," Roheim observes, "are those who have no mothers;"

> they originated of themselves. Their immortality is a denial of the separation anxiety. Separation from the mother is painful; the child is represented in myth as fully formed, even before it enteres the mother. The tjurunga from which it is born is born is both a phallic and a maternal symbol.

The tjurunga, like the cartouche that encircles the Pharaoh's name as the course of the sun encircles the created world, is a drawing of the spirit being, an enclosure in which we see the primal identity of the person. But all primal identities are Adamic, containing male and female, man and animal, in one. We are each separated from what we feel ourselves to be, from what we essentially are but also from the other we must be. Wherever we are we are creatures of other places; whenever we are, creatures of other times; whatever our experience, we are creatures of other imagined experiences. Not only the experience of unity but the experience of separation is the mother of man. The very feeling of melody at all depends upon our articulation of the separate parts involved. The movement is experienced as it arises from a constant disequilibrium and ceases when it is integrated.

"Composition is not there, it is going to be there, and we are here," Stein writes. Between there and here or then and now, the flame of life, our spirit, leaps. A troubled flame: "The time in composition is a thing that is very troublesome," Stein tells us — "If the time in the composition is very troublesome it is because there must be even if there is no time at all in the composition there must be time in the composition which is in its quality of distribution and equilibration."

An anxious flame: "In totemic magic the destroyed mother is re-animated and in the totemic sacrament, eternal union of the mother and child is effected," Roheim tells us. But the eternal separation of the mother and child is also celebrated therein. "As a religion it represents the genitalization of the separation period and the restitution that follows destructive trends." War, Heraclitus

called the flame, or Strife.

"All men are bringing to birth in their bodies and in their souls," who here speaks as an Eternal One of the Mother, says to Socrates.

> There is a poetry, which, as you know, is complex and manifold. All creation or passage of non-being into being is poetry or making, and the processes of all arts are creative; and the masters of all arts are poets or makers . . . What are they doing who show all this eagerness and heat which is called love? . . . The object which they have in view is birth in beauty.

Beyond beauty — birth in the eternal and universal.

"According to the natives of the Andjamatana tribe," Roheim tells us, "children originate in two mythical women known as maudlangami. They live in a place in the sky. Their long hair almost covers them and on their pendulum breasts are swarms of spirit children who gather their sustenance therefrom. These women are the source of all life, each within her tribe producing spirit children of her own moiety." But these women, we realize, are not first sources; they have their origin in turn in the telling of their story. In the communication of the story the narrator and the listeners have their source and all life has its source and draws eternal nourishment.

"Each Aranda or Juritja native has an immortal part or spirit double, whose immortality consists in eternally rejoining the Mother in the sacred totemic cave. From time to time they reidentify themselves with the eternal in them." It seems to Roheim that in the story "they deny their great dependence upon Mother Nature and play the role of Mothers themselves." But Mother Nature in the eternal bond with Man is Herself, as He is, the member of a cast in a drama. In the rites that Roheim sees as denials of dependence, we see the dancers reviving the human reality in all that is disturbing to union, involving themselves in, insisting upon, and taking their identity in, the loss of their identity, keeping the rime of their separation alive in the sound of their unity, rehearsing their exile in the

place where they are. The flame springs up in a confusion of elements, times, places.

For the Freudian, it all rests in a "psychical survival of the biologic unity with environment." "This 'oceanic feeling' (Freud) or 'dual unity situation'", Roheim argues, "is something we all experience in our own lives; it is the bond that unites mother and child." "By taking the tjurunga along on his wanderings the native never gives up the original bond of dual unity which ties the infant to his mother."

From the unity once known between Mother and Child, the boy is initiated in a rite in which things once unified in feeling are shown as separated — this is the anatomization of the Australian scene, where parts of the body are exhibited as independent entities; but it is also the anatomization practices in which the poet is born, where words once unified in the flow of speech — the Mother tongue which in turn had been articulated from the flow of sounds in the child's earlier initiation — are shown as articulated — separated into particular sounds, syllables, meanings — in order to be reorganized in an other unity in which the reality of separation is kept as a conscious factor. The "Mother" is now the World, and the "Child" is the Self. The World is revealed as a "Creation" or "Poetry" or "Stage", and the Self, as "Creator" or "Poet". The man or the hero begins his life that demands something of him, a wandering in quest of something known in the unknown. Taking with him the quest itself as his Mother, as the Australian takes the tjurunga or the devout Kabbalist the Shekina, he is to be most at home in his exile.

*

Roheim telling about his Australian natives does not mean to initiate us into the Aranda but through his creation of the Aranda in our minds to initiate us into the psychoanalytic fiction. The old men prancing, bleeding themselves and showing their private parts; the emu ancestors, the eternal ones who come in the dream, the primordial Mother and Child, are people not of the Australian bush but of a creative book, haunted by "the wanderings of human beings from the cradle to the grave in a web of daydream," as the author of this mankind himself wanders in a web of psychoanalytic reverie.

"In the eternal ones of the dream it is we who deny decay and aggression and object-loss, and who guard eternal youth and reunion with the mother," Roheim writes in his coda:

> The old and decrepit men of the tribe become young and glorious once more. Covered with birds' down, the life symbol, they are identified with the eternally youthful ancestors. Mankind, the eternal child, splendide mendax, rises above reality . . . The path is Eros, the force that delays disintegration; and hence the promise held forth in the daydream and in its dramatization is no illusion after all. The tjurunga which symbolizes both the male and female genital organ, the primal scene and combined parent concept, the father and the mother, separation and reunion . . . represents both the path and the goal."

This tjurunga we begin to see not as the secret identity of the Aranda initiate but as our own Freudian identity, the conglomerate consciousness of the mind we share with Roheim. "Above and below, left and right," the Kabbalist would have added in drawing his figure of the primordial man. The whole story is "daydream", a "web", and we are not sure that because the path is Eros, the promise may be "no illusion after all". The hero is the eternal child, but he is also splendide mendax, a glorious maker of fictions, in which all the conglomerate of what Man is might be contained. The simple tjurunga now appears to be no longer simple but the complex mobile, that Giedion on Mechanization Takes Command saw as most embodying our contemporary experience: "the whole construction is aerial and hovering as the nest of an insect" — a suspended system, so contrived that "a draft of air or push of a hand will change the state of equilibrium and the interrelations of suspended elements . . . forming unpredictable, ever-changing constellations and so imparting to them the aspect of space-time."

If, as in Malraux's Psychology of Art, we see painting and sculpture not only as discrete works but also as participants in a drama of forms playing throughout the time of man, so that what were once thought of as masterpieces of their time and place are

now seen anew as moving expressions of — but more than expressions, creations and creators of — spiritual life, as acts of a drama of what Man is that has not come to its completion, but which we imagine as a changing totality called Art; so poems too begin to appear as members of a hovering system called Poetry. The draft of air or the touch of a hand reappears now as the inspiration or impulse of mind that will change states and interrelations — "time in the composition comes now," Gertrude Stein puts it, "and this what is troubling everyone the time in the composition is now a part of distribution and equilibration" — "past the danger point" — throughout the history of Man. History itself, no longer kept within the boundaries of periods or nations, appears as a mobile structure in which events may move in time in ever-changing constellations. The effort of Toynbee's Study of History, beyond Spengler's comparison of civilizations, is towards an interpenetration of what before seemed discrete even alien areas of the life of man. Present, past, future may then appear anywhere in changing constellations, giving life and depth to time. The Eternal Return, no longer conceived of as bound to revolutions of a wheel — the mandala of a Ptolemaic universe or of a Jungian Self — beyond the "organic" concept Toynbee derives from Vico's life cycles, we begin to see now as an insistence of figure in an expanding universe of many relations. The Composition is there, we are here. But now the Composition and we too are never finished, centered, perfected. We are in motion and our meaning lies not in some last or lasting judgment, in some evolution or dialectic toward a higher force or consciousness, but in the content of the whole of us as Adam — the totality of mankind's experience in which our moment, this vision of a universal possibility, plays its part; and beyond, the totality of life experience in which Man plays His part, not central, but in every living moment creating a new crisis in the equilibration of the whole. The whole seen as a mobile is a passionate impermanence in which Time and Eternity are revealed as One.

Elie Faure in The Spirit of Forms (from which, as from Spengler's The Decline of the West, Malraux's thought, we take it, develops) writes:

> We have reached a critical point in history when it becomes impossible for us to think profoundly — or to create, I imagine — if we isolate ourselves in the adventure of our race, if we refuse to demand a confirmation of our own presentiments from the expression in words or in the arts that other races have given themselves . . . One of the miracles of this time is that an increasing number of spirits should become capable not only of tasting the delicate or violent savor of these reputedly contradictory works and finding them equally intoxicating

(he speaks here of those fetishes and cathedral statues that Malraux in his work is to find "sinister" in their colloquy) but

> even more than that, they can grasp, in the seemingly opposed characters, the inner accords that lead us back to man and show him to us everywhere animated by analogous passions, as witnessed by all the idols, for all of them are marked by the accent of these passions . . . The critical spirit has become a universal poet. It is necessary to enlarge inordinately, and unceasingly, the circle of its horizon.

This "we" was "an increasing number", but it was also, Faure saw, a few, an élite — a cult, then, of "the mobility of the spirit, favored by the exigencies of environment and the mixture of the species", projecting "a limitless visible field of emotion and activity", towards a cathexis of all that was known of man and the word, in terms of an open and expanding consciousness, as our Aranda initiates project their field of emotion and activity in terms of a tribal consciousness as an enclosure of time and space. For the Australian, the hardness of Nature herself drives him out from his home-place. The Aranda is a man of an actual wasteland where he is again and again forced to wander in times of drought and famine when a man in want of water often opens a vein in his arm to drink the blood, and the brotherhood of the tribe must be kept in a constant imagination against the hunger in which men eat each other. Here the "we" is a term of survival itself. The creative

fiction — the tribal narrative, the eternal ones of the dream, the spirit doubles, and the immortal sky-mothers — has its intensity of realization in the traumatic experience of the actual environment.

The esoteric tradition in Jewish mysticism again had its intensity in the loss of the home-land and in the long wandering in exile as children of a spirit-Mother, the Shekinah. She was the Glory, but She was also the Queen or Mother or Lady, and She might appear, as She does in The Zohar, as a great bird under whose celestial wings the immortal spirit-children of Israel nestled. The Jews, like the Aranda, lived in a threatening environment that called forth, if they were to survive, an insistent creation, the tenacity of a day-dream to outlast the reality principle.

For the Imagists in London in 1912 there had already been exile. Pound, Eliot, and H.D., had sought a new spiritual home among eternal ones of the European dream, among Troubadors or the Melic poets, in refuge from the squalor and stupidity of the American mercantile, industrial and capitalist world — "the American dream", it was called. Joyce had chosen a voluntary exile from Ireland, "dear dirty Dublin"; and Lawrence had fled from his environment in the industrial working class village to wander in exile in search of his own Kingdom of the Sun.

It was the World War that provided the traumatic crisis — it was the very face of the civilization showing through at last, the triumph of squalor and stupidity where the cult of profits and the cult of empire combined to exact their tribute, and the other cult-world of the poetic vision was challenged as a reality. Only in the imagination would beauty survive. "I would bid them live," Pound sings in his Envoi to Mauberley in 1919 —

> As roses might, in magic amber laid,
> Red overwrought with orange and all made
> One substance and one colour
> Braving time . . .

He addresses in the Envoi a "her", whose "graces give / Life to the moment" — a Lady "that sang me once that song of Lawes", but also a Mother that the Imagist poets had taken — Beauty. To survive

in spirit men must be reborn in Beauty's magic amber, for the rest were revealed by War where

> Died some pro patria, non dulce non et decor
> walked eye-deep in hell
> believing old men's lies, then unbelieving
> came home, home to a lie,
> home to many deceits,
> home to old lies and new infamy . . .

"Wrong from the start — " Pound describes himself: "No," —

> . . . hardly, but, seeing he had been born
> In a half savage country, out of date . . .

to be completed in CATERPILLAR # 2

RITES OF PARTICIPATION is Chapter 6 of Part I: Beginnings of The H.D. Book. Chapters 1 and 2 have appeared in Coyote's Journal, Chapters 3 and 4 are to appear in the Winter 1967 issue of Tri-Quarterly, Chapter 5 appeared in Aion, and selections from Part II: The Day Book appeared in origin #10, second series.

PASSAGES 30 STAGE DIRECTIONS

"It's not so, not strictly so,
that's the trouble," E.P., Venice
1964

Slowly the toiling images will rise,
Shake off, as if it were debris,
the unnecessary pleasures of our lives
And all times and intents of peaceful men
Reduce to an interim, a passing play,
between surpassing
Crises of war.

Upon the stage before:

He brings the camera in upon the gaping neck
which now is an eye of bloody meat glaring
from the womb of whose pupil sight

springs to see, two children of adversity.

The Mother's baleful glance in romance's head of writhing snakes haird
freezes the ground.

Okeanos
roars, wild oceanic father, visage compounded of fury and of wind

(the whole poem becoming a storm in which faces arise)

mouths yawn immensely and hours, as if they were made brothers,
stare.

From the body of the poem, all that words create

presses forth to be: youth, with lightning flash
that now is sword of gold, two-edged,
or of the sun-glare
cutting eye-nerve,
painful youth!

And Pegasos springs "born near the springs of Ocean"
ὅτ' Ὠκεανοῦ περὶ πηγὰς γένθ'
spurts up from the broken arteries carotids out of
deep sleep the blood carries upward
(Ocean then, the drowsy deep)
awakend
flies
to Zeus-Father above,
Lord of the deep skies. whose House
awaits him,
the pressure of whose tides
upon the shore of life is like a horse raging,
thunderous hooves, striking
flashes of light from unbright matter.

In the carved panel of the sarcophagus of Golgoi
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Handbook of the
Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus.
As given in Cook, Zeus, volume two, part one, page 718)
the twain rise to form for this moment
the head of a new monster
Genius
so starts up, affrighted, of sudden stroke
"the which a double nature has (Spenser
telling his syllables here)
that from the garden verse addresses each word
"It sited was in fruitfull soyle of old.
"And girt in with two walles on either side;
"The one of yron, the other of bright gold,
"That none might thorough breake, nor ouer-stride:
"And double gates it had, which opened wide"
the wound become so wide a door
a deed

(the skull fragments and brain splattered over the car's
upholstery, the red of blood and roses mixing
in a flash)

("So foule and faire a day I have not seene," another
murderous heart declares, who from Medusa's head
expects that Burning Would, to echo Joyce's pun,
will never come to Dance Inane:

"Come, seeling Night,
"Skarfe up the tender Eye of pitiful Day," he cries:
"And with thy bloodie and invisible Hand
"Cancell and teare to pieces that great Bond,
"Which keepes me pale. Light thickens..."

Shakespeare sees how in the assassin's mind
the world is filled with enemies, the truth
itself is enemy and quickens action to override
subversive thought.

"Ile fight," Macbeth declares: "Give me my Armor."

"Tis not needed yet."

"Ile put it on:
"Send out more Horses; skirre the Country round,
"Hang those that talke of Feare..."
)

in which the nation's secreted
sum of evil is betrayd

Dionysos, Zeus's second Self,
Director of the Drama,
needed.

*

Dark figures move. flares / scatter in the night.
And from the stage /wild hammerings, a frightful pulse
Begins. Behind the lids / an after-image burns
And the tortured spirit in the meat remembers now
The nation has gone so far in wrong / Truth grows fateful
And true song gives forth portents of woe. Sublime

Forbidden intensities convert the personal,
and from what I am
Masks of an old pageant, from my world and time
Portentous rimes, foreshadowings history become a plot demands.
The dramatist
Would not misunderstand the melos "romantic and sensational,
with both song and instrumental music interspersed"
Taking over the place of the real, dims humanity and moves us
toward its own End. Melodramatic

His language, and from his troubled mind
Echoes of speeches, incantations, wild prayers,
As if to teach us "the perfection of certain ideals,
the depravity of others", he casts upon the wind.

(The President
orders history
reupholsterd)

Upon the sarcophagus of we know not whom,
each figure, impending, become a sign,

Perseus with the head in a wallet
turns his back and marches off,
"to be followd by his hound" the scholar observes
(exactly the figure of Le Mat in the
Ancien Tarot de Marseilles), "hounded", then.
Another figure gives Perseus wingd cap,
sandals and caduceus of Hermes: Macbeth
so little knows he moves as
messenger of the myth, the
plot of the play.

And from the dying body of America I see,
or from my dying body,

emerge

children of a deed long before this deed,
seed of Poseidon, depth in which the blue above
is reflected

released

huge Chrysaor and Pegasos sword and flash

Father of Geryon, of him
who carries Dante and Virgil into Hell's depths,

and Steed of Bellerophon

beneath whose hooves once again
new springs are loosed on Helicon.

ROBERT DUNCAN

ALL THE COLORS IN THE WORLD

My neck hurts me. The sky close
grey to the earth, this earth or the excuse
thereof, concrete. My head hurts me,
my teeth hurt me, the pains cross
across my eye. Send check to E.

V, I love you, believe me, believe me!
Stasis of emotion, the dam, here where
the eye looks inwardly, the pain turns
grey. The sky close to the earth, my
neck is stiff and hurts me.

One looks forward to work? Some strange
thing has occurred secretly to make me
grey inside, raining, Send check to E.
My daughter's birthday, a book, colored
pencils for bright trees, sunlight, the

blue blue sky with a bright cloud
fat floating in the middle, paper, the
blue horizontal sky: Send check to E.
Across my eye the grey rain, the sky, the
pain in my head hurts me: and my grey eye.

PERCEIVE

With a sudden shock
it comes to me that I am more
father

than my father was. I who
have lived so consistently
with children. But not

to say I am not my father's only son.
I am my father's only son
you do understand. He is

my father, and was father
for so long so many faithless
and ignorant years

stolid and remote
almost a placidity given,
and held, maintained certainly

in that far that dignified
location.

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and ignorant years

stolid and remote
almost a placidity given,
and held, maintained certainly

in that far that dignified
location.

In the paper moon
the center. In the paper moon
the orange center. A kind of desperate

love suggested. In the kindergarten
window? What will
save
these children --

Billy Rose?

What will save them. (A voice
penetrating the American
darkness slowly
coming down disguised

as snow or sea-wrack

A voice bitter brittle sweet.

Rose silent/ from his oozing corpse

how save these candid children.

The clear objects
one grows to love. The clarity
of objects one gets simply used to.
A beloved child, his particularity,
old friends missing on two
cylinders.

Did someone say Baudelaire?
It is Baudelaire as well
become object to the eye and ear.
That puritan glance, the agony
of his purity of pity for himself
that was never self-pity. That stern eye.
Those elegant black suits.

To someone who said Baudelaire
I say: Baudelaire. I say
moonlight of memory. I say
blue notes.

My youth is left in the heads
of a mere clique of people
who no longer know each other.
I say grey stone to my Baudelaire.
I insist Wallace Stevens was a tragic man.
I say there are slicks of mud
and puddles on my mother's grave.
What is in my head is the remnant
of arcane formulae wrought
for their particular perfection.

THE INSANE WAITERS

for Mort

Gentlemen, gentlemen, these
are the waiters I mentioned in my friend's work.

(One has a bowl of soup and is caught
in simple frenzy. A hand, another, up to
the ceiling with his order pad, these

are the insane waiters.

Dozens more, ranging, guffawing, the steam.
The swinging door to the kitchen where other
waiters are battered against the pots
and blistering coal stoves.
These are the waiters,

gentlemen, in my friend's work.

Discarded, torn across and thrown
to the garbagemen, they will persist,
they are the entire world before us,

supplying, supplying the goods, the good

so good, good goods: terrific in their smoke
their perfectly hilarious evil.

OCTOBER

from Six Years

The Rich have money; Give to the Rich!
--J.C.: "All suffering is self-willed."
you CAN take it with you
(THE OTHERWORLD FORWARDING SERVICE
leave your money with us;
we'll get it through--)
Low-order Tantric phenomena.

"God in cinders/ wreck on child."

J.C.'s law--"You can't get out of the same trap
until you get into it." Hemp
"retted" with dew or water; then the fibers
"scutched"
Somehow life has been like . . . every day is Flag Day
for me . . .
Cold turkey with all the tremens

(File your absence
with NULL & VOID
--Gilt-edged Insecurities--
loose ends bought in vacant lots
& the
NOWHERE VACUUM TRUST)
says the Armpit from Outer Space.

"1000 shares of mikan futures" (she's a
Kshattriya--hell yes,
let her run things)

Promiscuity: they sell themselves short.
All
Dragon-Riders

All, Dharma Kings.

GARY SNYDER

A TEST OF TRANSLATION I:
Eugenio Montale's Piccolo Testamento

Little Testament

This thing the night flashes
like marshlight through the skull of my mind,
this pearl necklace snail's trail,
this ground glass, diamond-dust sparkle--
it is not the lamp in any church or office,
tended by some adolescent alter boy,
Communist or papist,
in black or red.
I have only this rainbow
to leave you, this testimonial
of a faith, often invaded,
of a hope that burned more slowly
than a green log on the fire.
Keep its spectrum in your pocket-mirror,
when every lamp goes out,
when hell's orchestra trembles,
and the torch-bearing Lucifer
lands on some bowsprit
in the Thames, Hudson or Seine--
rotating his hard coal wings,
half lopped by fatigue, to tell you, "Now."
I'ts hardly an heirloom or charm
that can tranquillize monsoons
with the transparent spiderweb of contemplation--
but an autobiography can only survive in ashes,
persistence is extinction.
It is certainly a sign: whoever has seen it,
will always return to you.
Each knows his own: his pride
was not an escape, his humility
was not a meanness, his obscure
earth-bound flash
was not the fizzle of a wet match.

--tr. by Robert Lowell (from Imitations,
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966)

Piccolo Testamento

Questo che a notte balugina
nella calotta del mio pensiero,
traccia madreperlacea di lumaca
o smeriglio di vetro calpestato,
non è lume di chiesa o d'officina
che alimenti
chierico rosso, o nero.
Solo quest'iride posso
lasciarti a testimonianza
d'una fede che fu combattuta,
d'una speranza che bruciò più lenta
di un duro ceppo nel focolare.
Conservane la cipria nello specchietto
quando spenta ogni lampada
la sardana si farà infernale
e un ombroso Lucifero scenderà su una prora
del Tamigi, del Hudson, della Senna
scuotendo l'ali di bitume semi-
mozze dall fatica, a dirti: è l'ora.
Non è un'eredità, un portafortuna
che può reggere all'urto dei monsoni
sul fil di ragno della memoria,
ma una storia non dura che nella cenere
e persistenza è solo l'estinzione.
Giusto era il segno: chi l'ha ravvisato
non può fallire nel ritrovarti.
Ognuno riconosce i suoi: l'orgoglio
non era fuga, l'umiltà non era
vile, il tenue bagliore strofinato
laggiù non era quello di un fiammifero.

--EUGENIO MONTALE (from La Bufera E Altro,
Neri Pozza, 1956)

Piccolo Testamento

This that at night keeps flashing
in the calotte of my mind,
mother-of-pearl trace of the snail
or emery of brayed glass,
is neither light of church or factory
that may sustain
clerical red, or black.
Only this iris can I
leave you as testimony
of a faith that was much disputed,
of a hope that burned more slowly
than a hard log in the fireplace.
Conserve its powder in your compact
when every lamplight spent
the sardana becomes infernal
and a shadowy Lucifer descends on a prow
of the Thames or Hudson or Seine
thrashing bituminous wings half-
shorn from the effort, to tell you: it's time.
There's no inheritance, no goodluck charm
that can ward off the monsoon's impact
on the gossamer of memory,
but a history endures in ashes alone
and persistence is only extinction.
Just was the sign; he who has realized it
cannot fail to find you again.
Everyone recognizes his own: pride
was not flight, humility was not
vile, the tenuous glitter polished up
down there was not that of a match.

--tr. by Cid Corman (from origin #9,
second series)

Lowell version: comment:

I know little Italian, so this Test is mostly based on the two English versions of the poem.

The Lowell version is irritating; it stands next to the Corman version as a kind of $4.99 pair of shoes next to a hand-made pair of sandals; irritating in that things like "log on the fire", "on some bowsprit" and "the transparent spiderweb of contemplation" occur; the soundings are dead, the version clops along from wood line to wood line with little of the joy one associates with the display of an organic thing; the three extra lines are filler; the "its" simply awkward English; Montale's "sardana" distorted to "hell's orchestra" and his sensitive light & dark images that in their alternating fading & reappearing structure the poem not lost, but somehow in the Lowell version not made evident. Montale tells us he can only leave us what he saw — only this iris, my sight — the Lowellian "rainbow" is typical of his Imitations in which, on one hand, the poet does not accurately translate, nor, on the other, let go of the home of the text so as to get out & into his own mind.

Corman version: comment:

It reads beautifully; is extremely clear & light-weight; is paced, & believes in its original (e.g., when Montale uses "calotta" Corman takes him at his word; "calotta" is not "skull" nor is it "husk" which Ben Belitt has in his version of the poem — see Quarterly Review of Literature, Vol. XI, No. 4). Phrases such as "calotte of my mind", "emery of brayed glass" & "Conserve its powder in your compact" are lyrical and convincing; Lines 20-24 are particularly moving, & the penultimate line, while not matching Montale's echoing of "balugina" in "bagliore", at least holds the reader to the reality of hell implicit in that line (in the Lowell version we are directed to a wet match).

FOR
COUNTRY

BOMBS AND HELICOPTERS — THE ART OF NANCY SPERO

The Bomb, imperator of death, orgastic, spews out its victims — the trimphant erectile carnalization of the Bomb: the cock proliferates and explodes heads, the heads and tongues slaver blood and spittle — bombs shit out their victims, fecal heads drop — the freaking of the Bomb, misshapen, mutilated, insane, jissoms of blood. This is carnage, the holocaust, the sanguinary abattoir. The Bomb squirts, hemorrhages, puses — frenzied, copious, spastic — a stew of gargage and death, gross, lewd foul — the prolixity of destruction.

Anarchic, the tumid Bomb is monstrously and indecently personified, the hysteria of the horrific. Taking on human form, male, female or androgynous, a mangling spewing personification, the Bomb mutates into polyp-like fecundating monsters, trellised with heads and phallic extensions. These are ugly and dirty images but exact as metaphor. The most ferocious and repulsive image is that of victims who lick the Bomb, also victims who lick the chimney, the swastika marked crematorium.

On occasion, the effulgent Deity or Christ rides the Bomb, appears apparitionally or uncertainly presides or remonstrates over the scenes of carnage and havoc below. The All-merciful, the Intercessor, the Redemmer, the Risen, the First Cause atop the Bomb (at times like a radiator cap). In one instance, the stigmata bleed and mingle with the bloody spewing of the Bomb, Christ like a 19th century Nazarene, delicate, evanescent, mystic. The real and unreal, whichever is which, fuse — gold, silver, lustrous Christ, burnished plane — the besmeared, etiolated dismal earth — the manic moral insanity and demented terror of the violence.

Planes and helicopters are similarly anthrophagus, pitiless, gluttonous. Whirlybirds are bug-like or machined in luminous insect colors or lurid gold and aluminum. Monstrous or antiseptic, they go about their destruction, gorging and eating indiscriminately. The helicopter ingests its victims, regurgitates and shits out blood

and entrails, drags and smashes bodies. The planes, elegant and silver-winged, are often emblazoned with mottos or moral injunctions, e.g., K.I.L.L., F.U.C.K. or L.O.V.E.

The whirlybird becomes the Beast of the Apocalypse, the machine becomes the technological equivalent for metaphysical nightmare. Victims are slaughtered in the terrible technological intimacy of the machine as it hovers over the ground. The Bomb becomes eschatologically intimate and grotesquely present. Destruction is literally in our living rooms via TV. All drops away, time, distance, the unthinkable. The malign fantasy and virtually insane imaginings of these paintings — the grotesqueries which form the delusions of the psychopathological — are given body by Hiroshima, by napalm. Fantasy encounters the calculations of the Pentagon, holocaust is factual (probabilistically speaking). The eschatological is as real as a Chrysler or a tank and more real than a Brillo box. The power of this art is in its viturally insane and strained correspondence to what is possible — to what is actual. Fantasy, the Beast, and Herman Kahn are all inscribed on the head of a pin engraved L.O.V.E.

This art is terse and savage — a spewing out of metaphor analogical to the spewing of blood and spume in the images. This is an art of extraordinary and brutal fastidiousness, precarious and contingent. Control, seemingly sporadic, frantic or inchoate is spare and minimal — a very great simplicity contours the strained range of image. This art is promiscuous, obscene, intemperate, spastic, and irrefragable.

LEON GOLUB

THE ANSWER

I went there and expected to like it, dig it as you know how you'll feel something, what people have said, tracings, words dropped by those who have gone and come back, a certain evidence. But I didn't go decided as it were, for I went too with a life-load of preconception, learnt images — even at thirty the very good U.S. public school training, its residue cannot be entirely gone. And so I went expecting certain vague almost indefineable drawbacks to what otherwise would be a good thing, a great thing, a necessary thing. When I got back the shortest thing I could think of to say to people was "everything you've ever heard about Cuba is a lie, even the good things!" Several friends took offense at that, resented my thinking .they only read the yellow press and nothing else. Of course I didn't mean exactly that; I was including myself in the accusation. But I don't know. I'd start to talk, look for the words and people who seemed involved at first would later look away. I myself trailed off. I began to find myself unable to finish phrases, complete any thoughts in description. It was impossible.

I worked on the poems — they said it better. There I said "create / a new language for this, we must, the old / is swollen / foreskin with no place to go" and again "these words have gone back / recovered original form / tense / place / the absolute center." That was the only way for it, really. I stayed with the articles, though, wrote six or eight of them feeling impelled to say it to more than could / would read the poems. At one point I wrote anything that came to me: experiences, conversations, even statistics. The formal articles I sent off to magazines that would have them. Notes, impressions culled from a journal I had kept, those I sent off to friends everywhere, typed endless copies and carbons.

A rabbi in Princeton, New Jersey wrote: "to visit . . . Cuba is not, as you well know, a 'privilege' readily granted those of us confined in this particular 'free world' corral, so we must depend on you to diminish our tragically self-binding, self-defeating and self-

imposed cultural blockade." But I hadn't been telling it, I don't think. Not really. I'd been too involved in how to tell it.

Well, it's time to stop this ridiculous posture, attention to the craft, fear of not doing it justice, trying to find new words, etc. We're stuck with the old ones, the old reader too and the old writer. This time around I'd like to forget all that — and try to remember. Really remember. What it was/is like. Why I've half a head of grey hair creeping over the dark brown at thirty, blossomed in that death and being born again in Habana. What did it mean? Why I take refuge now, in Mexico City, in the Cuban embassy for hours of coffee and conversation, closing the doors temporarily on a world I feel I will never be able to get used to fully again. How to go beneath statistics, admirable journalism and all accepted practice. Tell it as it is.

So I won't spend time here on the first country in Latin America freed of illiteracy, the excellent medical program for all, an educational program in which almost every adult on the island has reached sixth grade, the food situation in face of the blockade (three quarters of a pound of meat a week for everyone, a quart of milk a day for every child under twelve, a chicken a week for adults and children alike, plentiful seafood free of rationing, etc./, the progress in agriculture — the one greatly emphasized field — , new housing, fishing fleet, shipbuilding industry, the incredible cane fields, etc. Nor will I dwell on the material hardships: a raft of 1959model American cars going to ruin without new parts, the lack of attractive merchandise in the shops, ration books, hard work. I'll talk instead about those things you can't talk about.

Oh, Fidel, a man who spends twelve hours even now with a sick cow in the Escambray, a man who made the transition from mountain to prime minister's office and lost neither his humility nor his skill in the process. A man who walks among his people unguarded — and they're all armed. A man who has forbidden the cult of his person to include statues or street names or institution, yet the cult of his person is real and deserved and healthy; in what other country on earth do the people call their prime minister by his first name — and mean it?

Oh, the ease, the sense of real pleasure, the anguish lost and the full hole that leaves — when money ceases to be the goal and the reason for life! Haydee Santamaria, director of the Casa de las Americas and one who was with Fidel from the beginning: "Every day money looses its sentimental value a bit more in Cuba." And Sergio, walking through the streets: "For the first time in my life I feel good about spending five cents, a peso, ten pesos. Knowing the money is going somewhere, for the good of everyone, not just stopping short in some fat pocket!" And the real absence of the urgency, that monkey on the back of even the least of us — how to "make it", keep going, "make ends meet." It's a simple life when it's not hanging around your neck.

Walking around a housing project in the village of Baracoa in Oriente Province. The houses were "project" but pleasant, good materials, good space, individual gardens. Talking to the workmen and discovering that the humble farmers who would later occupy these houses were part of the crew putting in plumbing and electricity: the premise being, a man who puts in his own plumbing will know how to use and take care of it. Simple as life.

Oh, the air, hot, wet, sensual in the extreme! The endless palm trees, the endless line of sea, the beaches that don't stop. The beaches filled with blacks and whites and never really filled, never crowded because they go on and on. And the people, on them together. Oh, the "son", that quick insistent rhythm, that music all the time in the hand, in the foot, in the face. "Son" even as the soft drink name — taking the place of coca-cola!

And companero. Companera. The greeting. Be it cabbie or minister of education. The woman selling deodorant in the corner drugstore. The director of the art school, Cubanacan. It's the common denominator that connects, that pulls you together, that equalizes. The very real salutation that has restored to every Cuban the human dignity with which he was born.

Dignity. That goes for women too. And why not? Don't try to pass that "U.S. competition" over on us now; that's no solution. Centuries of Spanish tradition, the virginity cult in all its suffocating horror hasn't been much bettered by the "women in business"

north of the border. There it's an unnaturally forced solution that evens out the bedroom as well as the office. Too often, that great autonational progress has brought with it new problems, not the least being the growing alienation of human beings. But there's always the analyst/psychiatrist/therapist/psychologist/marriage councelor/business advisor/minister/priest or divorce lawyer — the men we create to solve the problems we create — at prices to fit every pocket. Meanwhile, throughout Latin America (and in most "underdeveloped" countries) women believe in their inferiority from the moment of birth. It's no job to get them to accept as natural the terms of the contract in all stages of life. All this — both irrational sides of the coin — has disappeared or is disappearing in Cuba.

Your companera in the Sierra Maestra, the girl who held the rebel line next to you and used the same gun, took the same risks, held the same belief in the same ultimate triumph, perhaps died — she is seen, touched, understood for what she is. Neither the craving equal nor the timid inferior. When real life — and death — has been shared, there's not much room for an "arranged" woman's place. Women and men work together. Each according to his or her individual talents, needs, desires. The strong moral code of the Socialist Revolution — natural result of opposition to the previous regime of vice as prime export — has had its place. But everyone is young in Cuba.

In every direction: youth taking over. The average age of the nation's ambassadors: 35. The director of the Minas de Frio school — where six thousand study to be teachers in an isolated mountain retreat — is 23. Fidel himself is not yet 40. And Cuban youth is moving like young people all over the world towards stripping contrived social inhibitions from the real life energies. Soon Cuba will have come into its "generation": a nation of working leaders educated within the revolution. After eight years the profile can be seen. The gusanos (those who have left, who people Miami and New York) share a common trait: age. Either real or assumed. Is this clear? Am I saying it right? Can you see the nature of all human drives to capacity, including sex, love, being, man and women moving in their true dimension, neither breaking under the weight

of an IBM equalizer nor stagnating under the patched up double standard Latin code of "morality." The "macho": nowhere. Or, to put it another way, you won't get your ass pinched by a social coward on the streets of Habana!

World jargon overcomplicating the facts: in a book called The Irrational Man, popular with a friend — poet and professor — in the States, William Barret says "Marxist manuals of philosophy refer to all philosophies that deal with the human subject as forms of 'irrationalism.' Their rationalism, of course, consists in technical intelligence, in the power over things (and over men considered as things); and this exalting of the technical intelligence over every other human attribute becomes demonical in action . . . ." This seems, at first, a sane philosophy to "hang on to", certainly many steps above the "KILL A COMMIE FOR CHRIST" banners waving along the sidelines at recent liberal marches. The truth is, it couldn't be further from the truth! Socialism (on its way towards Communism) as experienced in the new fronts — Cuba, the growing fight in other parts of Latin America — emphasizes all other human attributes: dignity, talent, need, beauty, the rights to eat, sleep, learn, keep healthy, In other words, and very surely, "the pursuit of happiness!"

All over the world men are fighting in this pursuit of happiness. And they are dying in it: VIETNAM: "On one occasion, two Viet Cong prisoners were being questioned aboard a plane headed for Saigon. When the first refused to answer, he was tossed out of the plane." VENEZUELA: "Another system commonly used to force prisoners to talk is that of pulling out finger nails or cutting off, in the prisoners' presence, the fingers, ears or sexual organs of another prisoner." GUATEMALA: ". . . As for Victor Manuel Gutierrez, reports say that he died as a result of the 'hood' torture, in which the victim dies of suffocation when a cork or rubber hood is placed over his head and tied tightly around his neck." COLOMBIA: "Razed villages, mass executions, indiscriminate bombing raids, the rape of women and girls, the 'adornment' of fences with heads of men and women who were beheaded for the crime of aspiring to live free of opression." VIETNAM: "In a town in Kien-

Tuong Province, seven villagers were led to the public square. The troops cut their abdomens open, pulled out their livers and exhibited them. These victims were women and children. In another place a dozen mothers were beheaded in front of the other villagers. At another, government forces brought pregnant women together in the public square on the pretext of honoring them. Once there, they ripped open the women's abdomens and pulled out the unborn infants." BOLIVIA: "The fact that the Bolivian military goons have not yet yielded to the pressure of world public opinion for 45 days, which demands that Regis Debray and his companions be brought to trial, indicates that they may have been tortured." (All quotes from Le Monde of Paris, Gramma of Habana and The New York Herald Tribune).

In Cuba the situation, the "scene," the truth is what I have tried to say, magnified by a thousand. Elsewhere people are fighting for that truth and they are dying for it, and their deaths are hard ones. But Cuban poet Felix Pita Rodriguez says:

BECAUSE WE LOVE LIFE

Because we love life
we can fight to the death

We want it to be known
to be well understood, so that no one is mistaken
that these ten words circulate in our blood
and course through our bodies and into our hearts
where they are repeated day after day
in voices muffled and profound

Because we love life
we can fight to the death

We want it to be known
we want everyone on earth to listen to us carefully
and know that every person here carries

these ten words written on his forehead, floating
in his pupils, sheltered
in the nests of his clenched fists

We want it to be known
that here no one is blind
here no one walks with his eyes closed
nobody stumbles around in the darkness
or calls himself Ulysses; there are no sirens
here we all know the way
and the price of the passage
here we all say
because we love life
everything we have caressed
that which has existed
for eternities (the alchemy of dreams)
and those things which are so close
so much our own, undiluted
in our blood, the jubilation
limited to a certain name
or a few family names
the cultivated manners
which are so mysteriously congruent
with the pulse of our own hearts,
we can fight to the death

We want it to be known
to be well understood, so that no one is mistaken
that here we can all say
Because we love life
the light of the patio, the sun on the eaves
that twisted branch of the orange tree
beside the wall
the humble stones of a nameless street
so distant that it seems to enter
into the mythology of the soul,
we can fight to the death

We want it to be known
We want everyone on earth to listen

Here no one is blind
Here we all know
We know, yes we know
that it is possible to snap
the slender wire that strings together
life's small moments — unknowing
and banal, insignificant, alien
belonging to others — here
in this solitary universe
a nostalgic territory, our own.
All this, in a game
both fateful and cruel, can be
suddenly exposed and lost

We know
here no one walks with his eyes closed
here no one is blind
here we all have our ears tuned in
to the beating of our hearts.
That is the voice that orders and directs
and gives us our sentence
Because we love life
because we love
things that happy hands
create and build
without thinking that it is all
made for those who
have not yet been born

To death we will fight
to defend life

(translated by Lionel Kearns)

This is an answer. It is the only answer and it is a conscious answer. An after all this rambling, it's still only a small part of what I found in Cuba.

MARGARET RANDALL

From Politics to Metapolitics

Frederic William Atherton Lecture

Harvard University March 20, 1967

Norman O Brown

My first response to the invitation of this honorable company and to the wishes of Frederick William Atherton

"a topic related to ethical or social criticism"

was that it would be a pleasure to present my kind of radicalism in this environment - -

Since then I have been wondering about radicalism and wondering about myself

These are times of great uncertainty and doubt as well as anguish.

Starting out in the Thirties

When to be young was to be a Marxist

I ask myself

What has happened since then?

What have I learned in my bizarre psychedelic trips
I mean my books

What news is there that might be useful to the citizens
the young citizens
who are starting out now?

You have a right to ask how much, or how little.

So much has changed

perhaps the message is instability

permanent instability in the mind

corresponding to the permanent revolution in things

instability to be accepted as an eternal truth

like Heraclitean flux – –

But in this Heraclitean flux, or fire,

there is for me also a Heraclitean Logos

the logos, the word, is One, or oneness
unity
unification
the unification of the human race.

Intellectuals: for me the word still spells a vocation –

intellectuals who have been entrusted with the word, the Logos,

are called to work for unity.

If, as Blake said, the fall is into Division

the vocation of the intellectual is to overcome the consequences of the fall.

I don't know about the proletariat, but

the intellectual, as such, has no fatherland –

or, to use another metaphor,

there is a heavenly city.

Logos seeks unification; and the fact it faces is Division

Alienation, in the old Marxist vocabulary

the rents, the splits, in the newer Freudian vocabulary
the schisms
the schizophrenia.

Now - if I may make a Great Leap Forward -

alienation is schizophrenia

the outcome of the collision between Marx and Freud is their unification

the perception of the analogy between the two

the analogy between social and psychic
society and soul
body and the body politic.

In the mythology of Marxism, the revolution is from below:

Those lower classes, lower depths, are the depths of depth psychology

an underworld repressed by the bourgeois ego

a cauldron of energy and violence with the lid on

an anonymous mass, or social id --

If you take the psychoanalytical idea of projection seriously

the proletariat (if and when we perceive one) is us projected

a collective projection

a collective dream, or nightmare

(the dream is in the language

(and the language is acted upon

(saying makes it so)

If you take the psychoanalytical idea of projection seriously

the ego constructs itself by projecting the other

the ego constructs itself by drawing an imaginary line

between inside and outside

an imaginary boundary-line

And this imaginary boundary-line is the reality-principle

The reality-principle is the distinction between inner world and

external reality

and it is a false distinction.

"The false reality-principle"

This is to take psychoanalysis more seriously than the psychoanalysts do

or to pass beyond psychoanalysis

Beyond the reality-principle is poetry
taking metaphors seriously
(metaphors and analogies)
that way madness lies.

The disintegration of the boundary-line between inner and outer
self and other

is the disintegration of the ego

the disintegration of the ego of the ego-psychologists

in Marxist terms, the disintegration of the bourgeois ego
of bourgeois individualism

or, alienation overcome – –

The split between inside and outside is the primal split
is the origin of alienation.

Already in Marxism
the intellectual was to go to the masses
bourgeois individualism, the separate self, was to
be drowned in the proletarian ocean

Marxist thought substitutes for the reality of individuals the reality of classes

But classes, as external realities, mutually external, are not real either

it all really takes place in one body.

Marx, who, like Freud, is a genius who surpasses his own
limitations, once said:

"The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat."
He means ego and id. Of course proletariat, if you look
at the word, must also be genital.

At any rate, it all takes place in one body

one body that has been mysteriously dismembered
and needs to be remembered

to knit again these broken limbs into one body.

It must be some kind of embrace
overcoming alienation.

Emerson used to say, There is only one Man

After Emerson, what happened, on the American continent, to
this intuition?

To perceive that it all really takes place in one body

is to transvalue the old political categories

to pass from politics to metapolitics
or poetry.

The proletariat is dead
but the proletariat is us
long live the proletariat.

There is an inner Bastille to be captured
to release the prisoners

or rather, the inner and the outer Bastille is the same Bastille

or rather, the distinction between inner and outer is the Bastille
the false reality-principle
the government of the reality-principle,
to be overthrown

And the revolution is a visionary break-through
or poetry
or madness.

Revolution really is madness
political revolutions

The French Revolution, the Russian Revolution
Ten Days that Shook the World
The Great Cultural Revolution

All the pathology of the twentieth century
the madness of the millenia breaking out, &c
as Nietzsche prophesied —

The problem really is madness

There is a point where Marat and de Sade are one.

What to do with madness

The political solution to the problem of madness is
divide and conquer
segregration and repression
(like in asylums)
perpetual conflict

The political revolution is a temporary break-down followed by the reinstitution of repression
a cycle of explosion and repression
activity and passivity
in eternal recurrence

Perpetual conflict is the rule of politics
the reality-principle
the world as we know it

Is there any alternative?

A metapolitical solution to the problem of madness

would see politics as madness

and madness as the solution to politics.

Breaking down the boundaries is breaking down the reality-principle

? unification lies beyond the reality-principle

the communion is Dionysian.

Madness is even the solution to the problem of madness
it is sanity that needs to be saved
(I don't mean, save your sanity)

it was the greatness of Freud to see through, to bore through, the wall
separating sanity and insanity

it is all a problem of communication

the poet says, Madness is oneness lost

But oneness regained is madness also.

. Can we liberate instead of repress

Can we find a way of being permanently unstable --

Emerson says: "Whenever man comes, there comes revolution"
there is that great flame

It is the idea of permanent revolution

But permanent revolution cannot be political revolution
permanent political revolution is fratricide, or suicide,
it is the situation we are in now
the situation we are trying to escape from

To save the revolution it must be given a metapolitical meaning
as madness, or poetry
uninterrupted poetry:
surrealism, to stamp out reality.

Madness and Civilization
a very serious question

Here I differ from one of your sages
B.F. Skinner, Walden Two (202): "Nothing
comes from general frothing at the mouth"
I have done some frothing in my time

Madness is an eternal truth

and some shaking or quaking is testimony to the need for liberat
to the unconfortableness of cultur

It is possible that the future is a contented humanity
without neurotics like me
but I don't think so
I dont think the future is behavioral engineering
getting rid of unhappiness, maladjustment, madn

My utopia is

an environment that works so well
that we can run wild in it
anarchy in an environment that works

the environment works, does all the work
a fully automatic environment
all public utilities
or communication-networks
(the engineering contribution to unification; unification is also a matter of engineering)

My teachers in utopian engineering are John Cage and Buckminster Fuller

but was it there a divinely absurd anticipation in Marx, or Engels, saying that the government of persons will be replaced by the administration of things --

The environment can do all the work

Serious thought, thought as work, in pursuit of Wirklichkeit,
is about over
Wirklichkeit, the German word for reality, the reality-principle

The reality-principle is about over

Thought as work can be buried in machines and computers
The work left to be done is to bury thought; quite a job

To put thought underground
as communication-network, sewage system, power lines
So that wildness can come above ground

Technological rationality can be put to sleep
so that something else can awaken in the human mind
something like the god Dionysus
something which cannot be programmed.

The ordering of the physical environment will release unparalleled quantities and forms of human disorder

The future, if there is one, is machines and madness

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

The struggle should not be, is no longer, really, the struggle for existence.

But unification is not only a matter of engineering.

Marshall McLuhan is taken by some to mean that technology is bringing us into a global village

Buckminster Fuller is taken by some to mean that technology is bringing us a global network of public services

But there is some obstruction

There is some obstacle impeding the free flow of unification

political divisions, boundaries
but, at a deeper level, the reality-principle
the boundary between Self and Other
the logic which divides
which most people think is reason itself, or rationality

Rationality and the reality-principle are obstacles to unification.

But fortunately there is a disturbance in the house of reason

Ever since the age of reason something like a collective break-down has been taking place
a destruction of reason
a destruction in which intellect must immerse

In order that the disintegration of the ego may be the birth of some kind of collective consciousness

In order that the logic of division may give way to the logos of union

The logos of union whose name is, or one of whose names is, ever since the time of Hegel,

dialectics.

We are still Hegel's contemporaries
even in America, as Emerson knew
living in the last days, the end of history
the age of revolution and apocalypse

And therefore in that No Man's Land between reason and madness
which is dialectics
Reason and Revolution is really Reason and Mad

Dialectics is the revolt against rationalism
the discovery that self-contradiction is the essence of reality
the opening to the absurd

Dialectics is intellect seeking union with energy
in Marx, philosophy seeking union with the proletariat
in Freud, ego seeking union with id

In dialectics nothing is stable, movement is all
a logic of passion
Mandelstam in Russia in 1921 (Mandelstam, not Lenin; a poet not a politician): "A new heroic era has opened in the life of the word. The word is flesh and bread. It shares the fate of bread and flesh: suffering."

Dialectics is a dialectic of life against death
death is a part of life
like Freud, Hegel says the goal of all life is death:
"The nature of the finite lies in this, that it dissolves itself"
it must go under
this is self-contradiction in practice, in action --

Hegel, Phenomenology: "Not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself undefiled by devastation (Verwüstung), but the life that suffers death and preserves itself in death is the life of the Spirit. Spirit gains its truth by finding itself in absolute dismemberment (Zerrissenheit)."

Dismemberment, absolute dismemberment
the Spirit is Dionysus, the god who is dismembered
Dionysus, or schizophrenia
schizophrenia is spirit in absolute dismemberment
déchirement antrologique

Dionysus is also union, communion

Dialectics is the dissolution of all partial statements till they are lost in the whole
"the truth is in the whole"

And the union or communion is madness
dialectics is drunkenness or dancing
the Bacchanalian revel of the categories in which not one member is sober.

Hegel nevertheless made a Hegelian system
and Marx also made a system
and so did Freud; at least the Freud whom the Psychoanalytical Associations worship

Systems, Marxist, Freudian, can be, as they say, flexible

But flexibility is not enough --

Mind, or spirit, or life, must learn how to die
it must go under

All these systems have immortal longings on them
that is why they are dead
born dead &
representing from the hour of the birth the dead hand of the pa

The flexibility is wriggling to avoid death
what they mean by rationality is, don't die
be consistent --

The rule of die-in-order-to-live
diese Stirb' und Werde
is not flexibility but metamorphosis
is not political but poetical.

· The real action in Love's Body
(you can tell by the creaking)
is to find an alternative to systematic form

Dialectics, in flight from the systematic, finds refuge in aphoristic form

Aphorism: the word smells of literary self-consciousness

the reality is brokenness
words in absolute dismemberment
or even, absolute self-contradiction.

We have been told that the medium is the message

Aphoristic form has political or rather metapolitical implications – –

Politics is systems

There is a hidden truth or secret
that is what the Unconscious is all about

But it cannot be put into systematic, reified, permanent form

Systematic reified permanent form creates an elite who possess the secret

(Platonic academy, occult order, political party,
the repository of the secret)

Mass- mysticism is poetry
an open secret – –

"The truth is in the whole"

But the whole is in any part, not in the system —
infinity in a grain
and in an instant
the whole is here or nowhere

Aphorism is instant dialectic
the instantaneous flip instead of the elaborate system

Only so do we have a form of intellect that is so easy
that any child could do it
or, only a child can do it

And so perishable
that it cannot be hoarded by any elite
or stored in any institution

A form of dialectics, therefore, unequivocally on the side of freedom
or madness.

And finally
(using Hegel again as my landmark)

The Hegelian dialectic is the simultaneous total affirmation of this world and its total negation
Both the right-wing Hegelians and the left-wing Hegelians are in it
Both the Marxian change the world and the Nietzschean everything always the same

The hard thing here is the Nietzschean affirmation — —

· Nietzsche says
"He does not negate any more"

At any rate intellectuals should watch their language

The critical judgement
which separates the sheep from the goats
We and They
critical judgement is party or sect-formation
is scission of the one body
and projection of part of ourselves

Intellect as protest
or great refusal
(Hawthorne-Melville's No in Thunder)
gets us nowhere
in this mess, rectitude or righteousness is unobtainable
and will not save us.

What kind of language might be helpful?

Instead of morality, metaphor
to ferry us across
the language which unifies
The language of healing, or making whole, is not
psychoanalysis, but poetry.

Poetry is the visionary form, or explosion
which overthrows the reality-principle
and transforms this world, just the way it is,
without changing a thing
the transformation is the unification.

These are the fragmentary moments which bring something new into the world

Fragmentary moments: there is/is it anything we can count on or accumulate

Poetry is the solvent which dissolves
the rigorous stereotypes of political ideology
the numb automatism of political reflexes
the somnambulist gravity of liberal believers
These are the obstructions to be dissolved
to be loosened up - -

Poetry is the transforming spirit of play
metaphorical play

Begin today
no place needs the transforming spirit of play more than the
University
that Bastille of liberalism
especially that Bastille inside the Bastille in which I live,
the Humanities

The great revolutionary intellectual of the 20th century: James Joyce
who reduced all that solemn nonsense to nonsense
leading us in the path to which Wittgenstein directed us
from disguised nonsense to patent nonsense
a transition that is accomplished not by linguistic
analysis but by poetry.

The primal Logos is the poetic Logos
and the Logos of unification is poetry

The intellectual, to whom was entrusted the word, was given
the power to unify the world this way

There are also engineers, to whom is given the power to unify the
world in another way

There are also politicians.

It is the tale of Shem and Shaun
who turn into Shem, Ham, and Japheth
or Tom, Dick, and Harry.

PSYCHEDELIC FIREMAN

psychedelic firemen
all over america
New York City/ Babylon
everyone high
meat of animals
tropical sugars
LSD crime
america is a land of drug addicts
ones who have blown their minds
historically locking-up the mellow

/crime in the streets
a slogan

walk this city by sundown
witness
flames upon roof tops
along the piers
palisades crumbling spires
organized amusement parks / fright-death
upon roller-coasters with one end only
passengers fallout backwards
into mad carnival music of the streets
sirens imported from druid regions of europe
worldwide police believe them
the weirdest
roller coaster through manhattan by underground express
iron cars trains of aushwitz
jangling metal grit subway air
MAN DOES NOT BELONG UNDERGROUND

yet the blue men
of the eerie druid regions
patrol in place of dogs mad
metal iron symphony insanity
to dope-heads no matter
strob-beam police cars swirling at subway entrance
"oh my god, not another subway crime!
underground housewives scream in despair
women waiting to be raped by the "A" train
fast metal shaft
black native express
sweatdripping cars drooping ubangui lips /waiting for the
from midtown 59th
to harlem 125th
sixty-six blocks
of pillage/ shreiking white women of washington heights
mass rape of ornette
the trumpet boy

GENERAL MOTORS WORLD'S FAIR ATTENDANCE TOPS VATICAN PAVILLION

AMERICA!
is a land of speeding cars
drapes the moon
phospourous fart fire burns carbohydrates
racist sugar napalm-whisky

speeding cars
lights white green flicker
white lightening
along highways & underground tubes
huge poster signs
wood posters billboard platters neon
phallic & decaying
red devil paint /alcoholic white light
upon flourescence
versus sky

king blue
PLASTER WALLS DON'T BURN
they say
firemen flashing from posters
reeling from billboards
clutching little girls
moby dick his eyes
mommy her mouth
fireman leers/burnt jelly smile
I HAVE SAVED THIS LITTLE GIRL IN NAME OF THE STATE

KEEP NEW YORK PLASTERED

face of fire
methedrine skin erosion pop
flashing white crystals
lining streets white Xmas
blaze out strob beam swing black light
camera weird focus
intrepid fireman
hands up little girls dress
fireman reels
intrepid child does not scream
collapsing walls
sirens high dog howl/ end of a mother's scream prolonged
in the hearts of our countrymen
door burst flailing axes
swords saxaphones
broken back furniture smoke fire wood

WHILE
thru harlem fire rages water cycles
weekends of fun, partying /burning flesh
this thanksgiving
for the natives who hunt for the feast
but do not partake/

silent natives screaming
thru western guns swords axes
tall tenor saxaphones
blaring black trumpets/page of swords
spanish habana
African chants/ long-legged dance
to the bullfight
stab the beast
dont waste a stroke by spear
symbolic death for your meat/
harlem raging
trumpet tenor axes blare
MIDNIGHT HOUR
/sugar shards high music
to tumult of pyschedelic
artillary
of cities insane/

--david henderson /lock-city /
end of 1965

A TEST OF TRANSLATION II:
Untitled poem of César Vallejo

Un hombre está mirando a una mujer

A man is looking at a woman,
at this very moment he studies her, . . .
sees her two hands, her breasts, her two shoulders;
questions himself, as his heart presses against his strong, white, rib.
This man has no child who might grow into a father,
this woman no child whose sex might be apparent . . .
Although I do see a child now ---a centipede child,
passionate, energetic.
I realize that they don't see it,
standing between the two of them, wriggling, dressing itself . . .
I accept them.
I accept them more and more;
I accept him as I would a clean joint of a wisp of clean hay--
and then I call to them . . .

tr. by Lillian Lowenfels & Nan Braymer
(from Modern Poetry From Spain and Latin America, Corinth, 1964)

Un hombre está mirando a una mujer,
está mirandola inmediatamente,
con su mal de tierra suntuosa
y la mira a dos manos
a la tumba a dos pechos
y la mueve a dos hombros.

Pregúntome entonces, oprimiéndome
la enorme, blanca, acérrima costilla:
y este hombre
no tuvo a un niño por creciente padre?
Y esta mujer, a un niño
por constructor de su evidente sexo?

Puesto que un niño veo ahora,
niño cienpiés, apasionado, enérgico;
veo que no le ven
sonarse entre los dos, colear, vestirse;
puesto que los acepto,
a ella en condición aumentativa,
a él en la flexión del heno rubio.

Y exclamo entonces, sin cesar ni uno
de vivir, sin volver ni uno
a temblar en la justa que venero:
Felicidad seguida
tardíamente del Padre,
del Hijo y de la Madre!
Instante redondo,
familiar, que ya nadie siente ni ama!
De qué deslumbramiento áfono, tinto,
se ejecuta el cantar de los cantares!
De qué tronco, el florido carpintero!
De qué perfecta axila, el frágil remo!
De qué casco, ambos cascos delanteros!

2 nov. 1937

--CESAR VALLEJO (from Poemas Humanos, Losada, 1949; corrected from the original edition, Paris, 1938).

A man is watching a woman,
is watching her immediately
with his sumptuous earthly sickness
& he watches her two-handedly
& he knocks her over two-breastedly
& he moves her two-shoulderly.

I ask myself then pressing down
my enormous white steel rib:
Hadn't this man
a child as a growing father?
And this woman a child
as builder of her evident sex?

For I now see a child,
energetic impassioned centipede child:
I see they fail to see it.
blow its nose between the, wag its tail & dress up;
for I accept them,
her in augmentative condition,
him in the flexion of the blond hay.

And I cry out when without stopping not even one
from living, without turning not even one
to tremble in the joust I venerate:
Happiness followed
belatedly by the Father,
by the Son & by the Mother!
Round familiar
instant that today no one feels or loves!
From what stained aphonic dazzling brightness
the Song of Songs is carried out!
From what trunk, the flowering carpenter!
From what perfect axilla, the fragile oar!
From what hoof, both front hoofs!

--tr. by Clayton Eshleman (unpublished)

Braymer/Lowenfels version:
Comment: not really a test; Vallejo's talent absolutely annihilated; images either dropped, distorted or rewritten in such a way that nothing makes senses; stanzaic order destroyed; two-thirds of the poem missing; a piece of a poem like a chunk of flesh handed to the reader, passed off as a whole; Vallejo's growing underground reputation in this country founded on such shit (although decent versions by Hays were done 15 years ago). The Lowenfels/Braymer book has not received one negative review! Thus this evidencing, this outrage.

Eshleman version:
Comment: "mal de tierra" may be an idiom I didn't catch. Lines 4-6 are as unusual in the Spanish as the English. Typical of Vallejo's method: strength in adjectives as opposed to nouns & verbs — often, as in line 16 he'll blow your mind modifying something into the surreal & then back into the expected. The last seven lines of the poem are extremely intense & difficult: however, once I grasped that the "round familiar instant" refers to orgasm & is seen in the poem as the central universal act out of which the multiplicity of connections as well as non-connections comes, a coherent English version became possible. "casco" in the last line may just refer to "skull" or even more generally "container, vessel, that which is hollow" etc.; however since we do not have a word in English that carries an exact ambiguity here, I used "hoof" (which the word also means) which mates with "delanteros" — "front hoofs", the idea being that from some mad cosmic hoof comes what we see before us, two front hoofs i.e., the beauty of the generic as well as the ungraspable.

LETTERS OF WALLACE STEVENS, selected and edited by Holly Stevens, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1966. $17.50. vii — xxxviii plus 890pp. plus (index) i— xxxix.

THE ANGEL OF NECESSITY

To live in the world of creation — to get
into it and stay in it — to frequent it
and haunt it — to think intensely and fruitfully —
to woo combinations and inspirations into
being by a depth and continuity of attention
and meditation — this is the only thing.
Henry James
(quoted in LETTERS OF WALLACE STEVENS, p. 506)

No poetry of the 20th century was less predictable than that of Wallace Stevens. It seems even yet like pure fluke. And of all the lives of the poets known to me none has struck me as being, outwardly at least, as unremarkable as that of Stevens. The LETTERS only reveal and confirm what the legend had indicated: that the legend is the poetry.

From Reading, Pa., to Hartford, Conn., that's about the size of it. The theory is simple enough, baldly stated: "I am what is around me." But wait a minute: "panache upon panache" deploys. Suddenly, out of the wilderness of the normal, of the ordinary, come these extraordinary celebrations of the actual, such fantasias of the spirit as make us quicken again to see what world it is we inhabit after all.

To read these letters is to have anyhow brought home decisively five points about the man and poet Wallace Stevens.

1. For the imaginative intelligence the ordinary is the most fertile source for whatever poetry extraordinary may occur.
2. An authentic voice will be pervasive and always integral.
3. The intimate discovers its maximal scope in supra-personal

projections of its realizings.

4. Poetry is one of the sanctions of life.
5. The devotion to poetry is the devotion to whatever human community.

Let me examine each of these statements in the light of this correspondence and drawing upon whatever other evidences occur within the published work.

I.

For the imaginative intelligence the ordinary is the most fertile source for whatever poetry extraordinary may occur.

Even today there are countless people who scarcely wander far from their native ground. I recall a shopkeeper in Paris telling me that she had never been from her suburban arrondissement to the centre of the city. But to find a poet, and one of such decided scope as Stevens, who has rather early in his career settled down to a small city life is certainly odd. Stevens' eccentricity, if you will, resides in his very "normality".

He had done his do at Harvard — without overstaying it either, just long enough to have had contact with Santayana as a poet — pushed on, after some hesitation, through law school and then did a rough-and-ready tour of North America that had some repetition soon after in his early work with the insurance claims job he entered. So that his sense of the continent and his fondness for Florida was firsthand — though it was more eye than hand. But the bulk of his life was the routine that so many know these days: home to office and office to home. And he rarely digressed after his only child, the editor of this book, was born.

Independence is the virtue his old-fashioned Pennsylvania Dutch parents most inculcated, independence of language without loss of courtesy or care. At age 15 he could write to his mother:

> If Reading were as miserable as Ephrata I should be solaced in a measure but I can at least swim in clean, clear, wet water, I can eat food, I can swear when ever the eloquence of boiling passion rises, I can use both eyes when looking, I can contract

debts, I can be your own dearest tootsey wootsey — .

That's 1895. From summer holiday home. Can anyone fail to feel the humor, the affection, the unusual language command already moving? And there is, moreover, a feeling of "pleasure" in handling language.

At no time in his life, so far as these letters disclose, and they are, if not exhaustive, very generous in their offerings and very openly edited — even possibly to the point of aching some, does Stevens bow to any man's opinion at the loss of his own. His own inimitable and indomitable nature procures its own responses.

The leverage is the actual, the so-called "real", the "necessary angel" he so often evokes. "For my own part", he writes in 1947, "I like to live in a classic atmosphere, full of my own gods and to be true to them until I have some better authority than a merely contrary opinion for not being true to them. We have all to learn to hold fast."

The stage is small, the circle of acquaintances small, but not constricting, somehow never constricting, more a constellation of such people as could share joys and pains of life with him upon an imaginative, not imaginary, level: someone in Ireland, someone in Cuba, someone in Ceylon, someone in Paris, his "agents".

A quiet life, then, a normal life, business at the office, gardening at home, an occasional trip to New York for shopping or to meet a friend or to see an exhibit at a museum or the Morgan Library. If he had enemies, they are not visible in the letters. He seems to have been friendly to a number of associates in law and insurance and been liked. And though he regretted that he couldn't devote all his energies to poetry, he as characteristically turned down the Norton Chair at Harvard, when it was belatedly offered him, for fear he might be forced — at age 75 — only months before his death (of cancer) — to retire from the company!

By the time of HARMONIUM — and he was already well into his 40s — his parents and closest sister were dead. The need to address his life most responsibly to wife and child undoubtedly accounts for his apparent dereliction of poetry for nearly a decade.

There was also a virtual critical silence to HARMONIUM.

Even so, there is a natural reticence that haunts these letters and the poetry. It suggests the sanctity of the home, of the intimate. And the only signs of it in this book are the journal notes and the early letters to his wife. In large measure, the unspoken is a part of his eloquence.

The visible existence hinged upon making a good living, but no more accoutrements of the good life than books, a phonograph, a roomy house. No car. Hand-tailored clothes. As local in his loyalties as Dr. Williams, not so far away in Rutherford, was too. And yet the contrast between these old acquaintances presents part of the range in American literary perspective. The general practitioner naturally had a long direct relation to a large segment of his community and at a lower economic level, a life that had barer aspects. It needed a more expostulatory, immediate poetry. Stevens, more reserved and isolate within the community, turned instinctively to a poetry of reflectiveness, but with that dazzling breadth of imagination that draws everything to it and out.

So much is the savor of the immediate in nature or the exigencies of peace found in a house or a room at night. The simplest event occurs like a headline: "the sun comes up like news from Africa." No one has ever doted so much on picture postcards or found so much in them. His imagination took off at the meagrest hint — took off and yet never lost footing. The "reality principle" is the fundamental and recurring feature of Stevens' life and poetics.

He is our Wordsworth. The differences of our time are operative here in every sense. Meditations on the given proliferate into swarming extensions of possibility. The world is not distorted in Stevens' images, but it finds uncommon overlays until a fresh dimension of "reality" comes over us. It is as if we were newborn in the new light shed by this radiance:

> There were those that returned to hear him read from the poem of life,
> Of the pans above the stove, the pots on the table, the tulips among them.
> They were those that would have wept to step barefoot into reality . . .

II.

An authentic voice will be pervasive and always integral. So it is with Stevens: he has peculiar presence. He is always distinguished. He has "style". And our natural curiosity to grasp how it is he came by it is, perhaps, reflected too in himself, in his preoccupation later in life with antecedents. It had no more desire to concoct a noble lineage than Shakespeare's appropriation of a family crest to set his father up by. But Stevens is explicit: (1945)

> ...after muddling round with American genealogy for several years, I think that a decent sort of carpenter, or a really robust blacksmith, or a woman capable of having eleven sons and of weaving their clothes and the blankets under which they slept, and so on, is certainly no less thrilling.

Part of the quest of ancestry, for the rooted, may also have been related to a dissatisfaction with the vagueness of the modern as against the sturdier reality of the past — or that possibility he could feel as an indigenous, if bare, poetry in Dutch Pennsylvania. It is never a matter merely of looking backward:

> (1948)...somehow, for all the newness in this world in which every familiar thing is being replaced by something unfamiliar, in which all the weak affect to be strong, and all the strong keep silence, one has a sense that the world was never less new than now, never more an affair of routine, never more mechanical and lacking any potency of fineness. Nicht wahr? It is as if modern art, modern letters, modern politics had at last demonstrated that they were merely diversions, merely things to be abandoned when the time came to pick up the ancient burden again and carry it on. What I mean is getting rid of all our horrid fiction and getting back to the realities of mankind.

The words find shape:

These figures verdant with time's buried verdure
Came paddling their canoes, a thousand thousand,

Carrying such shapes, of such alleviation,
That the beholder knew their subtle purpose,

Knew well the shapes were the exactest shaping
Of a vast people old in meditation...

Under Tinicum or small Cohansey,
The fathers of the makers may lie and weather.

For all his oddness or newness of speech, all his quirks, no poet of equal inventiveness has ever been less given to the eccentric as such. He laments punctuational deviations or typographical innovations. He likes clear sentence structure. None of this militates against a thoroughgoing metaphorical renovation. After all, as he had written: "The world about us would be desolate except for the world within us" or, in another essay, of the imagination said: "It enables us to live our lives. We have it because we do not have enough without it." And this is elaborated — clinching the matter — into:

> When one's aunt in California writes that the geraniums are up to her second-story window, we soon have them running over the roof.

And so persuasive is Stevens' imagery, the irrepressible high spirits of it, we are egged on to question the trope by saying: Why should they run over the roof when they can come in at an open window and go out again at the open door? This is California.

Letters, essays, or poems, the voice is one and singular. The spirit is that of a man given the capacity of speech and the power to find in the simplicities of reality, or the superficial complexities of it these days, the grounds of a larger metaphormorphoses (!): nothing leaves off and nothing remains quite the same after he has

touched it:

> The eye's plain version is a thing apart,
> The vulgate of experience. Of this,
> A few words, an and yet, and yet, and yet...

The first sounds of that "voice" we have come to know as true Stevens were in his collegiate journals and letters home and to his sweetheart and later wife. The marriage seems to have brought about a complete unity of poetry and voice, providing a confidence in walking about in the nakedness of one's inner being. As far back, or further, as 1900 we find the romantic utterance typically deflated by pinprick deprecation, the dread of being a poseur, the American scorn of effeminacy that dogs the notion of being a "poet" or "artist" and the sense of queerness:

> Sometimes I wish I wore no crown — that I trod on something thicker than air — that there were no robins, or peach dumplings, or violets in my world — that I was the proprietor of a patent medicine store — or manufactured pants for the trade — and that my name was Asa Snuff. But alas! the tormenting harmonies sweep around my hat, my bosom swells with "agonies and exultations" — and I pose.

In his essay "Two or Three Ideas" he has brought together the relation between personal tradition and style in a way that the letters continually exemplify as they keep modulating towards poetry:

> ...We stand looking at a remembered habitation. All old dwelling-places are subject to these transmogrifications and the experience of all of us includes a succession of old dwelling-places: abodes of the imagination, ancestral or memories of places that never existed. It is plain that when, in this world of weak feeling and blank thinking, in which we are face to face with the poem every moment of time, we encounter some integration of the poem that pierces and dazzles us, the effect is the effect of

> style and not of the poem itself or at least not of the poem alone...
>
> Style is not something applied. It is something inherent, something that permeates...It may be said to be a voice that is inevitable...

Style, as Olson puts it, "est verbum". And for verbal idiosyncrasy and command the USA has come up with no one quite the equal of Stevens. And it isn't the business of a Mark Twain or a Walt Whitman; that is, one determined to be an American type or archetype. He is as unpredictable as they were predictable. His use of French — or law Latin — is no affectation — no man, as his letters constantly show, was charier of the "act" — but what he felt was part of the language he was native to — and often the French words are left — at his own instance — unitalicized to indicate as much. His neologisms may not be available to others, but they well up and work perfectly in their contexts — like whoops of delight — and seem much less "devised" than the devices of a Cummings. Perhaps it all rises from "tedium vitae", as suggested in this letter of 1954:

> ...What a profound grace it is to have a destiny no matter what it is, even the destiny of the postman going the rounds and of the bus-driver driving the bus. Well, one prizes this destiny most particularly when the wind is blowing from the north-north-east and when the great clock in the office hall, which ordinarily tells the time so drearily that it would take twelve musicians to mark the true tediousness of it — sos-tenuto something, rings, with the same bells, periods that are all chiming gaiety...

It all ties in with the singularity any life must be, though few fully realize — both in the differences and in the relations those differences renew. In 1948, to another friend, touching also the ending of a year, rings a bell here:

...One of the great spectacles in the world today is the flood of books coming from nothing and going back to nothing. This is due in part to the subjection of literature to money, in part to the existence of a lettered class to which literature as a weapon just does not exist, any more than the savage lover of life exists. Literature nowadays is largely about nothing by nobodies. Is it not so? What kind of book would that dazzling human animal Consuelo sit down to read after she had finished washing the blood off her hands and had hidden once more her machete in the piano? Will you write it for her? Sartre or Camus would if they had time.

These stimulating suggestions are most inappropriate to the month of Christmas. Perhaps they are part of the revulsion I feel after looking through the book catalogues that have been coming in. Here one is in a fury to understand and to participate and one realizes that if there is anything to understand and if there is anything in which to participate one will pretty nearly have to make it oneself. Thus Jose stands up in his room at 2 Dickinson (as the clock strikes midnight and as Eliot and Blackmur step into their nightshirts and kneel down to say their prayers) and he creates by mere will a total wakefulness, brilliant in appearance, multi-colored, of which he is the dominant master and which he fills with words of understanding. Well, if he doesn't do it at 2 Dickinson, he may do it somewhere else. Bárbaro! Here the word shows its excellence. I suppose one never really writes about life when it is someone else's life, in the feeble laborious reportage of the student and artist. One writes about it when it is one's own life provided one is a good barbarian, a true Cuban, or a true Pennsylvania Dutchman, in the linguistics of that soul which propriety, like another Consuelo, has converted into nothingness.

Or more briefly as it finds voice in poetry:

One poem proves another and the whole,
For the clairvoyant men that need no proof:

The lover, the believer and the poet.
their words are chosen out of their desire,
The joy of language, when it is themselves.

III.

The intimate discovers its maximal scope in suprapersonal projections of its realizings.

To read a man's letters — realizing that much or most of it was not intended or expected to be read by others or the one other addressed — is to feel, so close is the life yet involved here, like a professional eavesdropper. In any case, the respect and feeling we have for the dead can only be measured by the respect and feeling we have for one another in our lives.

There is nothing in these letters we need for reading the work he had already generously provided. Yet it is only human — and not in the worst way — to be glad that they are available, even as a superfluity. Think how great an event it would be for the human spirit if, suddenly, a hundred letters written by Shakespeare throughout his life and touching his daily existence and work should be discovered and shared with us. Beyond explications, the poetry itself would at once share in the new "light" by wanting to be read with such "knowledge" in mind. It would be as exciting as the discovery of another Sumeria before Sumeria.

The fact that Stevens was a "loner" only enhances one's desire to know more what moved within him, to grasp the springs — as I have said — of his imagination. This isolation, though not that of a hermit by any means, was of an order that should, by all odds, have produced a provincial or a dude dandy — and perhaps to some that is what he seems. Yet it is Hart Crane, who scoured the literary society of his time, who is the dude and the provincial. Nor is it merely a matter of higher education in Stevens' case. There is a magnitude of vision and a maturity of judgment at work.

His metaphorical epiphanies are never rhapsodies in blue. Indeed, "The Man with the Blue Guitar" invariably suggests the

many-faceted sensibility of a Picasso with its imaginative penetration and afflatus. He was as well read as any of his contemporaries and in his modest way remained vigorously aware of painting and sculpture and music. He travelled only "at home", but wrote of Paris as if he were an exile from it. He has none of the pedantry or pretentiousness of Ezra and his literary circle ended at his doorstep. The language of imagination, extended from the realization so tellingly put:

> The poem is the cry of its occasion,
> Part of the res itself and not about.
> The poet speaks the poem as it is,
>
> Not as it was: part of the reverberation
> Of a windy night as it is, when the marble statues
> Are like newspapers blown by the wind. He speaks
>
> By sight and insight as they are. There is no
> Tomorrow for him. The wind will have passed by,
> The statues will have gone back to be things about.
>
> The mobile and the immobile flickering
> In the area between is and was are leaves,
> Leaves burnished in autumnal burnished trees
>
> And leaves in whirlings in the gutters, whirlings
> Around and away, resembling the presence of thought,
> Resembling the presences of thoughts, as if,
>
> In the end, in the whole psychology, the self,
> The town, the weather, in a casual litter,
> Together, said words of the world are the life of the world.

this is his language, his persuasion.

He is utterly American. You have only to think of him in

relation to Valery, with whom he is often compared in his meditative approach and in his concern with a poetry of poetry. Stevens has nothing of Valery's polish or classicism. Stevens could relish the annual Harvard - Yale football classic and that's about as far in that direction as he was likely to go. And nothing would have been more distasteful to the Frenchman, we may be sure. Stevens was "normal" with a vengeance, home-made, but not sentimental or stuffy. Valéry approached poetry as if it were a mathematical problem demanding a pure solution — as an equation. This has its interest too, but it is not what Stevens was at. He wanted to give pleasure and to offer a poetry that could realize life more fully at a time when so much of the traditional has gone by the boards.

The movement from the home, the quotidian, to the universal, beyond mere private confession or autotherapeutics, was an immediate instinct of his, as in an image from a typical Sunday walk of his in the years before his marriage in New York (1909):

> (to his fiancee)...almost a September sun (I know them all) — when the earth seems cool and the warmth falls like a steady beam...The woods along the side of the road looked at their height. And yet at twilight, in the neutral light, as I looked over the edge, I observed, meekly, that what I had thought to be various shades of green, were, indubitably, green and brown and yellow — oh, the faintest brown and the faintest yellow, yet brown and unquestioned yellow. You see! — I did not altogether respond — my sensibilities were numb — emotion sealed up. It is true. — But when the sun had set and the eveining star was twinkling in the orange sky, I passed a camp — where gypsies used to camp a few years ago. There were two or three campfires and at one they were broiling ham. Well... I did respond to that sugarey fragrance — sensibilities stirred, emotions leapt —...It was worthwhile, by Jupiter! Not that I give a hang for ham — horrid stuff. But it was the odor of meat — the wildness or the sense of wildness . . . I am glad I passed the camp — and I am glad they were not eating poiled potatoes . . .

It is the same urge that senses

The way, when we climb a mountain,
Vermont throws itself together.

Or earlier and always, in "Sunday Morning" when the daily exotica and the remote transfigurations of an ancient idea:

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice...

attain to the simple grace of the natural scene in:

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,
Before they fly, test the reality
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings..."

and find their natural and universal orbit in:

Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

How often do we find such words completing us and in a faith we have no time to question? And the hint of that final image in the merest word of a letter of a Sunday morning of May 1909:

Today I have been roaming about town. In the morning I walked down-town — stopping once to watch three flocks of

> pigeons circling in the sky. I dropped into St. John's chapel an hour before the service and sat in the last pew and looked around. It happens that last night at the Library I read a life of Jesus...

More and more, as the life went on and the years bent in, as both poems and letters reiterate, the actual seized him by its "essential bareness". As in the "scrawny cry" of an unknown bird

> ...at daylight or before,
> In the early March wind.

How the letters protest against age, against the finality of being "collected". And now every detail, mortal and momentary, takes on immensity without losing proportion, as in 1952:

> This morning I walked around in the park here for almost an hour before coming to the office and felt as blank as one of the ponds which in the weather at this time of year (October) are motionless. But perhaps it was the blankness that made me enjoy it so much...

Lebensweisheitspielerei.

> Weaker and weaker, the sunlight falls
> In the afternoon. The proud and the strong
> Have departed.
>
> Those that are left are the unaccomplished,
> The finally human,
> Natives of a dwindled sphere...
>
> Each person completely touches us
> With what he is and as he is,
> In the stale grandeur of annihilation.

As he could say in a letter of Marianne Moore, whom he always enjoyed and admired (1952):

> ...She belongs to an older and much more personal world: the world of closer, human intimacies which existed when you and I were young — from which she and her brother have been extruded like lost sheep. As a matter of nature they stick together. What she has she has tried to make perfect. The truth is that I am much moved by what she is going through. It is easy to say that Marianne, the human being, does not concern us. Mais, mon Dieu, it is what concerns us most.

The maturing poetry is the maturing life. The movement between metaphor and meaning reduces to the one true voice, never closer to us and never allowing for our motions more, no longer adducing anything that is not wholly felt and realized:

> The way the earliest single light in the
> evening sky, in spring,
> Creates a fresh universe out of nothingness
> by adding itself,
> The way a look or a touch reveals its
> unexpected magnitudes.

IV.

Poetry — in his own words — is "one of the sanctions of life."

Needless, perhaps, to say, all the points that I am making in this essay are indivisible and only some of the ways of seeing the life and work of a man of supreme imagination into "ideas" that remain forceful and vital. For all the finality of life and the gestures we make, there is never an end, only ends we let ourselves accept for lack of sufficient openness.

Poetry opens wider.

He read rarely in public and just as rarely, it would appear, in

private — aloud. The poems are silent conversations, the life of the mind rooted in the life of the feelings and in natural occasion. He can argue against large audiences, but he is not quite convincing, for we hear of his pleasure in a late letter at the full-house he found himself addressing at the Y in New York. Nevertheless, in a letter of 1948, in recoiling from the audience he scarcely knew, he declares himself:

> ...Your question about the audience for whom I write is very much like the question that was asked of a man as to whether he had stopped beating his wife. But, as it happens, I know exactly why I write poetry and it is not for an audience. I write it because for me it is one of the sanctions of life. This is a very serious thing to say at this time of the morning, so I shall let it go at that for the moment.

He was very much "a man who needed what he had created" — which sounds like a variation on an Hasidic tale told by Martin Buber: "Rabbi Mikhal once said to his sons: 'My life was blessed in that I never needed anything until I had it.'"

Despite the apparent rejection of an audience, there can be no mistaking Stevens when he states that poetry must give pleasure. No poetry has ever been made, or ever will be, that does not wait upon others. The approbation and confirmation of life intended by the word "sanction" turns upon art's public act, though performed in the sanctuary of the individual. Art is not cult, though it may be cultured. It is realization given its most accessible presentation.

Stevens likes his fruit to come "popped with juice" to the table. He is anything but dry — even when abstruse. He is the possessor of a spontaneous and free-swinging imagination that manages, even so, remarkable accuracy and discipline. He writes, prose or poetry, with relish. Analogy follows analogy, metaphors multiply, language flares and grows large with meaning — and then grows small again — decisively — until one wonders with him, towards the close of a life (and is one ever anywhere else?,) if it hasn't all been "a skeleton's

life":

> ...nothing has been changed except what is
> Unreal, as if nothing had been changed at all.

And yet, unlike the determined glumness of Beckett's intellectual dead-end-ry, Stevens sees the cheer of lucidity, of "things as they are" as sufficient "glory" against the waywardness of destiny and the dark night. As a note to Delmore Schwartz in 1950 informs us:

> ...You are fascinated by evil. I cannot see that this fascination has anything on the fascination of good. A bird singing in the sun is the same as a dog barking in the dark.

Not that he doesn't hurt as much as any, or feel the imminences: (about a year before his death)

> We remain quietly at home, engaged in meditation and prayer and thoughts of Paris. I have been trying to do a few poems. Just so one experiences the world in terms of one's age and physical condition, so one experiences poetry, I am afraid, in the same terms. The feelings, the great source of poetry, become largely the feeling of & desire to sit under the trees on a bench in the park...

And the poems enter:

> It is an illusion that we were ever alive...

or:

> It makes so little difference, at so much more
> Than seventy, where one looks, one has been there before...

Out of the drab, however, out of the least, out of a life trued by the local, by feeling and intelligence, he realized a poetry that sounds even in the letters a joyous recognition of relation. He writes at the edge of poetry at all times, as if that sanction poetry gives to life was his to give in response to others. So that his letters open often

with such instinct to communicate pleasure received, as if sharing his own poetic capacity as a common capacity:

> I am like a man wandering in a desert, and your letters are like visions of someone carrying water in my direction...
>
> One of the brightest things about Ceylon — Dominion or no Dominion — is that it contains at least one human being who is willing to take a lot of trouble to give other people pleasure...
>
> I am glad to hear you are only half dead...
>
> The weather has been so rotten that I am finally driven to writing to my friends in order to cheer myself up...
>
> Your Alegres Pascuas greeting was like a wand: a diversion from the normality of the normal...
>
> Coming into the office this morning and finding your letter on top of the mail was like walking out of the mist into a cheerful and friendly room...

Perhaps these minor words, these words "en passant" reveal why there is life for us in the poetry too. These are not just so many gambits. He is writing to those who are "with" him. But the role of poet is operative in the least moment. The life it sanctions in him he must try to extend for others. The kindness and gentleness and sparkle of the spirit at work here, even clearly against the moment's mood, are moving testimony to a "good man".

Not that he isn't frank to the point of bluntness, for poetry — or all fine art — insofar as it is a sanction of life — is demanding and cannot be dodged. And it is not a question here of whether one agrees with his opinions or not; they are all thoughtful, genuine, and delivered in good faith. So he can write of a book by Bryher, whom he knew, in 1952:

> She is sentimental: not crudely so, but delicately obscurely:

> yet all the same sentimental. The very subject of the book is a sentimental subject. It is something reflected, not lived, and that is why it is so difficult to become really absorbed in it...

He would not defend Pound, though it was the "thing" to do so at the height of the Bollingen controversy, for he felt lack of competence to do so:

> I don't suppose there is the slightest doubt that he did what he is said to have done. While he may have many excuses, I must say that I don't consider the fact that he is a man of genius as an excuse. Surely, such men are subject to the common disciplines...

but he mitigates this sensibly by adding:

> ...I don't believe that the law of treason should apply to chatter on the radio when it is recognizably chatter.

And he likewise felt no qualms at refusing a request to take part in a memorial of Dylan Thomas, referring to the silliness of Thomas's behavior in America, while also recognizing the tragedy of the loss.

There is a toughness in the man, which makes his feelings all the firmer when they turn up. And his criticisms of others in the arts reveal the faculties he brought to bear on his own work, the responsibility art implies:

> (1945)...Caillois is provocative, but he is also provoking; he is not a man with a first-class mind, nor even with a good mind. He says something that is untrue and then makes a great point of proving that it is untrue. This is a very easy thing to do; the good thinker says that something is true and then proves that it is true; this is not nearly so easy...
>
> (or in 1943)...It may be only too true that Van Gogh had for-

> tuitous assistance in the mastery of reality. But he mastered it, no matter how. And that is so often what one wants to do in poetry: to seize the whole mass of everything and squeeze it, and make it one's own.

The preoccupation with the art reflects the attitude he has towards his calling. Just as he could criticize, he could also assist unstintingly, as in a recommendation for a Guggenheim candidate in 1955:

> ...I don't suppose that a poet could ever maintain himself purely as a poet. To make it possible for an exceptional man at least to approach an existence as a poet, in which the question of maintenance is a subordinate problem, goes far beyond an award to promote or foster a desirable project, since the effect of it is to create a character wholly missing from contemporary literature...

Or again:

> poetry is not a literary activity: it is a vital activity...The good writers are the good thinkers. They are not able and skillful ink-slingers but people who put all that they have into what they say in writing.

For a man for whom poetry is one of the sanctions of life it is not surprising to find a lack of gossip in the letters. Contentiousness and pretentiousness are absent. He is professional, confident, persuasive, personal to the point of intimacy, but never private. Everything comes home, everything is imbued with poetry, everything finds just word. It is something more than a "supreme fiction": it is a life made true within the truest word.

From the earliest letters the capacity to project deepest response is found. The tender and charming fable he composed of the two pigeons for his future bride presages the late poem "Song

of Fixed Accord", as well as others. Indeed, how many poems startlingly turn up at this time that only much later came to poem. Compare "Prologues to What is Possible" (1952)

> There was an ease of mind that was like
> being alone in a boat at sea,
> A boat carried forward by waves resembling
> the bright backs of rowers

(And the images of Ulysses returning homeward to Penelope take on fresh charge and depth of meaning as Stevens's life comes round)

with:

> The verse that you sent was perplexing. Just what was it that was discovered? But the mental scene of many rowers at sea at night lit by a starry flash was suited to remembrance. I say it priggishly — words have that faculty — And as a mental scene, aside from remembrance, the verse had its value. — From one of many possible figures — regard the mind as a motionless sea, as it is often. Let one round wave surge through it mystically — one mystical mental scene — one image. Then see it in abundant undulation, incessant motion — unbroken succession of scenes, say. — I indulge in heavenly psychology — I lie back and drown in the deluge. The mind rolls as the sea rolls.

Over and over again, tirelessly, as the poetry itself, sustaining itself upon itself, life sanctioned by life, the letters extemporize on the theme: whatever I am or may be is poetry and whatever honors man most truly is poetry. The rock is immediacy, the light imagination. To refresh and reenable each other to the necessary zest to care to continue.

Throughout the letters, throughout, in short, the life, integrity of vision is manifest. The aches are not transcended, they are transfigured. Hard not to see the "fatality" given a poet of "seeing things

too well":

> (1943) When I look at the pictures of the children and then consider that I am able to think of their lives as wholes, the thing becomes distrubing. It is like standing by and watching people come into the world, live for a while and then go out of it again. It isn't that it makes me feel old, because I don't feel old; I feel young. And it isn't that I think of all these lives as having ended before they had really matured. It just upsets me; I have not thought about it long enough to know why...

Which turns into:

> There is so little that is close and warm.
> It is as if we were never children...

No poetry is better than its maker. The quality of the life is the quality of the poetry — at best. Stevens' work is the epitome of a life of solitudes and solicitudes the letters tell us, a life of rectitude and graciousness, of friends few but valued, of wit and grit, a man devoted to what he held dear, modest of realm but within his scope munificent: shades of the old "emperor of ice-cream". "A Child Asleep in its own Life" comes back to us and a passing comment in a letter of 1952 about the Rosencavalier: "The glancing chords haunt me and sometimes I try to reproduce the effect of them in words":

> Among the old men that you know,
> There is one, unnamed, that broods
> On all the rest, in heavy thought.
>
> They are nothing, except in the universe
> Of that single mind. He regards them
> Outwardly and knows them inwardly,
>
> The sole emperor of what they are,
> Distant, yet close enough to wake
> The chords above your bed tonight.

V.

The devotion to poetry is the devotion to whatever human community. This takes us back to the ordinary never failing its extraordinariness, the realization that each life is a wonder and a wonder to be shared in such a way that it may be nourishing, pleasing, satisfying, stimulating.

Way back when, in his wanderings around New York, Stevens happened to be at hand to observe the obsequies of Stephen Crane and was appalled by the shabbiness of response on the part of the citizenry to one of its "heroes". The theme recurs in 1948:

> Conceding that Yeats was a man of world-wide fame, it is an extraordinary thing in the modern world to find any poet being so honored. Yet the funeral of Paul Valéry was a great affair. Moreover, people are as much interested in Rilke as if he was human enough and, in addition, something more. The fact must be that the meaning of the poet as a figure in society is a precious meaning to those for whom it has any meaning at all.

This recalls to me, when living in Paris in 1955, a bitter cold winter's day with a long slow line of people waiting to see the body of Paul Claudel in state at Nôtre-Dame. This simply hasn't happened ever in the United States and is unlikely ever to happen. The poet's dedication in America is, of necessity, different from its counterpart in Europe or the Orient. Stevens' determination to be "normal" implies a desire to be a poet inside society — and in this he correlates with Dr. Williams.

This concern of his with poetry as a central concern of human possibility is expressed in his idea of a Chair of Poetry at some key American university — a project he contemplated chiefly with the would be benefactor of such a post, Henry Church, to whom the "Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction" is dedicated. In his memorandum to Church about the nature of the poet he affirmed:

> The knowledge of poetry is a part of philosophy and a part of

> science; the import of poetry is the import of the spirit. The figures of the essential poets should be spiritual figures. The comedy of life or the tragedy of life as the material of an art, and the mold of life as the object of its creation are contemplated...

The man of words comes forth, not simply for an honorary degree or self-seeking status, but for the dignity of all men inherent in all art. He addresses an audience of silences, not having to raise his voice from its inmost being, letting the words and the feeling realized in them hold whatever sway. And because he is a listener to silences, he learns to elicit from them kindred intelligences.

> ...a poem must have a peculiarity, as if it was the momentarily complete idiom of that which prompts it, even if that which prompts it is the vaguest emotion. This character seems to be one of the consequences of concentration...

> ...for me the most important thing is to realize poetry...It is simply the desire to contain the world wholly within one's own perception of it. As it happens, in my own case, and probably in yours, within perceptions that include perceptions that are pleasant...

> ...I write poetry because it is part of my piety: because, for me, it is the good of life, and I don't intend to lift a finger to advance my interest, because I don't want to think of poetry that way.

It is not a matter of "pure" poetry, though Stevens might not balk at that, nor is it quite the matter of "escape" that he at times promulgates, unless it be an escape into reality, into the feeling of being in all the fulness of human being. The very desire to comprehend the whole undermines any notion of a world apart. At the same time he recognizes the poem's own integrity, as <u>the</u> deposit and fund of human capacity:

...your remark that the final authority is always the poet is one of the things that I am given to contradicting. The final authority is the poem itself...The basis of criticism is the work, not the hidden intention of the writer.

(1950)...Of course, I have had a happy and well-kept life. But I have not even begun to touch the spheres within spheres that might have been possible if, instead of devoting the principal amount of my time to making a living, I had devoted it to thought and poetry. Certainly it is as true as it ever was that whatever means most to one should receive all of one's time and that has not been true in my case...

(1951) Isn't it the function of every poet, instead of repeating what has been said before, however skillfully he may be able to do that, to take his station in the midst of the circumstances in which people actually live and to endeavor to give them, as well as himself, the poetry that they need in those very circumstances?

Earlier, in answer to a question, he had said:

...The role of the poet today may be fixed by contrasting it to that of the politician. The poet absorbs the general life: the public life. The politician is absorbed by it. The poet is individual. The politician is general. It is the personal in the poet that is the origin of his poetry. If this is true respecting the relation of the poet to the public life and respecting the origin of his poetry, it follows that the first phase of his problem is himself.

This does not mean that he is a private figure. On the other hand, it does mean that he must not allow himself to be absorbed as the politician is absorbed. He must remain individual. As individual he must remain free. The politician expects everyone to be absorbed as he himself is absorbed. This expectation is part of the sabotage of the individual. The second phase of the poet's problem, then, is to maintain his

freedom, the only condition in which he can hope to produce significant poetry.

If people are to become dependent on poetry for any of the fundamental satisfactions, poetry must have an increasingly intellectual scope and power. This is a time for the highest poetry. We never understood the world less than we do now nor, as we understand it, liked it less. We never wanted to understand it more or needed to like it more. These are the intense compulsions that challenge the poet as the appreciatory creator of values and beliefs...

Stevens may address himself to an élite, but it is not an élite with class concerns, but rather one that cuts through all such formalism. The élite he addresses is that which any person may come to insofar as he has desire and capacity to come to it. It is one of intellectual depth and spiritual scope.

At the end of his life, after Yale University had decided to confer a degree upon him, his state passed a resolution acclaiming him for his poetic services and he answered it by saying:

...Such a resolution may be regarded as a way of saying that in a state like Connecticut poetry is recognized as an element of the life of the community and this is all that a poet could ask for.

Perhaps it is wishful thinking on the part of any American poet to say such things, seeing things as they are, but the hope is solid enough — like the star on Marianne's steeple.

Other poets have done and will do other things, but no other would or could have made an oeuvre of such incomparable delight and astonishment, transmuting and clarifying the terms of our quotidian world. One can envy those who have yet to find him and at the same time know that the poetry, like any living body, remains alive to continual discovery. It is a poetry we could not have imagined having and yet once having it cannot imagine ourselves ever doing without it. It is one of the accesses of the recent intelligence of being human. It is proof of imagination's community; as

such it is a "constant sacrament of praise".

EPILOGUE

The pensive man...He sees that eagle float
For which the intricate Alps are a single nest.

These letters we cling to — like Rilke's dying man turning back for a last look at the mountains fading behind or beyond. It is like waving adieu adieu adieu to one who is and is to be part of the house in which we dwell, the spirit's abode and as no less intimate part of the physical being we hold a little while and behold.

More than as a mine then for scholars, we have a sense of the man of the poetry still intricate in the make of them. Of such souls we cannot have enough. Here he is for us his most particular self arrayed in poetry: the gay man, the sad man, the ordinary man in glittering sombrero, the real man full of hexes, the unreal man brimming hallucinations of the actual, and the candle he keeps bearing to us in this space of a dark (if not darkest) night:

Within its vital boundary, in the mind.
We say God and the imagination are one...
How high that highest candle lights the dark.

Out of this same light, out of the central mind,
We make a dwelling in the evening air,
In which being there together is enough.

This figure moves almost without motion, vivid, illuminate, moving us before we know what is happening until we know ourselves willing captives of event — a figure of "words virile with his breath" — who can say and so does:

Inexplicable sister of the Minotaur, enigma and mask, although I am part of what is real, hear me and recognize me as part of the unreal. I am the truth but the truth of that imagination of life in which with unfamiliar motion and manner you guide me in those exchanges of speech in which your words are mine, mine yours.

Here in the letters, but beyond them, in the poetry, in "the flawed words and stubborn sounds" is one Pennsylvania Dutch Connecticut Yankee member of the most durable of American heritages, its 20th century poetry, in his own guise now, the angel of necessity, in the light of the common place the uncommon spirit:

It is he, anew, in a freshened youth
And it is he in the substance of his region,
Wood of his forests and stone out of his fields
Or from under his mountains.

CID CORMAN

Utano

December 1966

In Gratitude To Beethoven

The full roses with all their petals like the wrinkles of laughter
on your face as you bend to kiss someone
are bursting on the bush,
spotting my arm, as I carry a bundle of them
to my friends;
they seem to have come out of my skin
on this hot fragrant night,
and I imagine the inside of my body
glowing, phosphorescent, with strange flower faces
looking out from the duodenum
or the soft liver,
white as my belly, the eyes always disbelieving
the ugly processes that makes a living body.

Here I am,
Admittedly a strange combination of images;
yet constantly myself,
a funny series of animals
from the grey field mouse quietly stealing through the grain
caught by the silvery gopher snake sleekly sliding
across the grass,
caught and lifted, wriggling like a wild muscle trying to free itself
by the fierce open-eyed hawk,
being bitten itself by the deceptively soft tiger who will eat strange
and is shot by the man, the hunter, meat,
who kills for sport. Somewhere there is a consistancy,
perhaps the thread of destruction,
making me a preditor in every cycle
except the first one
and I have travelled so far away from my beginnings;
no one loves me:
That I can say with certainty,

without fear of contradiction in a hundred years.
by the series of images passing,
and of course I am always
slipping through life
alone,
as I am tonight,
feeling especial gratitude for Beethoven
who, in spite of all fashions,
remains a companion, whose place no one can take
permanently,
the thick pulpy sweet acid orange juice of his music
which has all the life you loving people
I hate so much
are trying to squeeze out of me.
Yesterday I discovered I was a stingy person;
today that even my gratitudes come out angers
at others. Who would admit as much
about himself, that he was such a failure
at creating that ultimate human good -- love

Let me say it publically, as openly as I can,
with no delicacy or tact:
I am like the guerilla fighter
who must sleep with one eye open for attack, a knife
or poison, a bamboo dart could come at any time,

No one has loved me without trying to destroy me,
there is no part of me that is not armoured,
there is no moment when I am not expecting attack,
there is no one I trust,
there is no love left in me that is not a wild flower,

wild and growing at its own leisure with no cultivation period
and no sense of order; it will take over any garden like a weed
and choke out any other growth; its flowers are magnificent,
purple, many petaled, blossoming all at once and unexpectedly

and with no regular cycle, no excuse for barrenness or proliferation;
I'm telling you
one, perhaps, that only Beethoven
now a violin or harp or piano
could love.

At times, like now,
I am filled with the anger of bitterness,
a sense of having been betrayed
and then cling even more fervently to old Ludwig
whose sonatas I played for so many years
feeling like a single
fresh orange blossom on a dessicated tree,
the field mouse in me slipping out through the pores in my skin,
running about the dusty grain field,
looking for food.
Sometimes I see my life as a cancer,
an utter unpredictable growth, having no reason
but much effulgence, if looked at as a series of flowers,
perhaps spectacular or interesting or even beautiful
with blood cells, but a death to someone,
a destruction,
a growth with no purpose,
one that got out of hand, by some malfunctioning organ.

At times, you who look at me with so much tenderness,
you make me cry.
Where are you when I need you?
This is all literary invention, a way of
talking when there is no life.
Must it be the reality?
No one has ever loved more than the surfaces,
the images. Where is reverence
for the dialogue,
the process?
One friend tells me in the super market that I'm a bourgeois housewife

and won't speak to me for three hours, after my mentioning a
need for protein; another tells me I'm a
pushy little girl;
after a conversation in which there was no agreement;
another says I'm a bad philospher;
and another that I'm weak because I cling to a man who can destroy me;
but most friends tell me nothing,
are simply not there when I need them.
It is their way of dealing with the proliferation of images.
Beethoven, my gratitude for you
knows no limitations.
I keep looking for a man who will satisfactorily replace you
in my life.
That would seem to show no gratitude,
no satisfaction.
It is
in fact
only a music I have
in my ears.
A need for a similar richness.

DIANE WAKOSKI

against light you my wife gather flowers along
the river reflecting hill and forsythia
at night, your fragrance dissolves metaphor

in the midst of the collapse our room dark our
speech our love the background

our bodies naked given up to each other reveal
the ecstasy the earth

the world a river flower reflecting light revealing
a river flower the world reveals our love in love

your odor returning night to bed our love returns
sea our first year

body to body our night less boundary than fragrance
releases bird hill river

FRANK SAMPERI

Robert Duncan's PASSAGE 30 first appeared in A Portfolio of Prints and Poetry published by Artists and Writers Protest. The portfolio consists of 16 signed & numbered etchings, lithographs and serigraphs by such artists as D'Archangelo, Di Suvero, Golub, Nevelson, and Reinhardt, and 18 poems in a separate binder, ten by fourteen inches, by such poets as Blackburn, Creeley, Duncan, Kunitz & Levertov. The prints & poetry, in a limited edition of 100, are set in a cloth bound box. The portfolio is now being offered for four hundred and fifty dollars. Checks should be made out to Artists and Writers Protest and mailed to Clayton Eshleman at CATERPILLAR.

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